

*A SCOPE e-BOOK*



# USING MOVING IMAGE ARCHIVES

*Edited by Nandana Bose and Lee Grieveson*

*Blank Page*

*A Scope e-Book*

# ***Using Moving Image Archives***

*Edited by Nandana Bose & Lee Grieveson*

Published by: *Scope: An Online Journal of Film and Television Studies*, 2010

Copyright: *Scope: An Online Journal of Film and Television Studies*

ISBN 978-0-9564641-1-8

Cover Design: Nandana Bose

Cover image: still of Annabelle More in *Serpentine Dance*  
(American Mustoscope Company, 1896)

# Using Moving image Archives

## Table of Contents

Notes on Contributors.....	i
Acknowledgements .....	iii
Introduction .....	1
Nandana Bose and Lee Grieveson	

### **Part I: The Archive and the Nation**

Amateur Film and the Interwar English Countryside .....	6
Michael McCluskey	
Critical Reflections on Film as a Historical Source: A Case of the Military Regime in Brazil .....	16
Nina Schneider	

### **Part II: The Ephemerality and Textuality of the Archives**

Audiences from the Film Archive: Women's Writing and Silent Cinema.....	32
Lisa Stead	
Archival Realities and Contagious Spaces: Shop Girls, Censorship and the City in <i>Damaged Goods</i> .....	48
Heida Johannsdottir	

## Part III: The Televisual and Digital Archive

Reading Political Comedy: <i>Yes, Minister</i> and Discursive Contexts .....	64
--	----

Matt Crowder

The Representation by French Television of Building Construction Work in and around Paris during the 1960s .....	82
--	----

Jacob Paskins

Archives and Prefigurative Practices: Digital Games Walkthrough Archives as Record and Resource .....	101
---	-----

Daniel Ashton, Bath Spa University

## Notes on Contributors

### Editors:

**Nandana Bose** is Assistant Professor in the Department of Film Studies at University of North Carolina Wilmington. She has published in *Velvet Light Trap*, *Studies in South Asian Film and Media* and *Feminist Media Studies*, and has a forthcoming article in *Cinema Journal*.

**Lee Grieveson** is Reader in Film Studies and Director of the Graduate Programme in Film Studies at University College London. He is the author of *Policing Cinema: Movies and Censorship in Early Twentieth Century America* (University of California Press, 2004), and co-editor, most recently, of *Inventing Film Studies* (Duke University Press, 2008), with Haidee Wasson. Grieveson is the co-director, with Colin MacCabe, of an Arts and Humanities Research Council funded project "Colonial Cinema: Moving Images of the British Empire."

### Contributors:

**Daniel Ashton** is Senior Lecturer in Media and Cultural Studies at Bath Spa University. His research interests include digital culture, media industries, and cultural labour. He has published in *M/C*, *Participations*, and the *Journal of Media Practice*.

**Matt Crowder** is currently researching a PhD into the reception of British television political comedy at the Media Arts Department of Royal Holloway, University of London. His research addresses how viewers enjoy or criticise television in the context of the text, television culture and British social history. He previously studied Film and Literature at the University of Warwick and Film and Television Production at University of Bristol. He also works part-time at the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and lives in south London.

**Heida Johannsdottir** is working towards a PhD in Film and Cultural Studies at University College London, where she is a research fellow. Her dissertation focuses on British silent cinema and representations of women, work and city space. She has taught courses in language and culture at the University of Iceland, the University of Wisconsin-Madison and University College London. Her research interests include silent and contemporary cinema, representations of the city, gender politics, and ideologies in media and popular culture.

**Michael McCluskey** is a PhD student in the Department of English at University College London. His thesis on the writer and filmmaker Humph-

rey Jennings looks at interwar and post-war urbanisation and shifts in individual, regional and national identity.

**Jacob Paskins** is a PhD student in Architectural History and Theory at the Bartlett School of Architecture at University College London. His AHRC-supported thesis is a social and cultural history of building construction work in and around Paris during the 1960s. Jacob obtained a BA in French & History of Art (UCL, 2006) and an MSc in Built Environment: Architectural History (UCL, 2007). He is a member of the research project "Autopsies: the afterlife of dead objects," which forms part of the UCL Film Studies Space work in "Cinematic Memory, Consumer Culture, and Everyday Life."

**Nina Schneider** studied History, Theatre- and Film Studies in Leipzig and at the University of Essex, where she is currently finishing her PhD ("The Official Propaganda during the Military Regime in Brazil, 1968-1979"). She has been teaching European and Latin American History at the University of Essex and the FernUniversität Hagen, Germany. Moreover, she gained work experience in film production companies in Munich and the BBC History Unit. Trying to reintroduce the notion of power into cultural history, she is interested in reconstructing the complex ways in which films are products and/or shapers of culture and identity in a specific historic context.

**Lisa Stead** is a PhD student in the Department of English at the University of Exeter, where she is completing a thesis entitled "*The Popular Female Cultures of the British Silent Cinema*." This AHRC-funded project investigates female-centred early British film cultures, exploring women's active involvement within a wide range of extra-textual cinematic discourses. Lisa also volunteers as a cataloguing assistant at the University's Bill Douglas Centre for the History of Cinema and Popular culture and acts as student representative for the BDC advisory board. Her wider research interests include adaptation, gothic cinema and literature, and textual scholarship and literary archives.



## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Arts and Humanities Research Council which funded the "Using Moving Images in Academic Research" project for over two years. None of this would have been possible without the vision and direction of Roberta Pearson. We would like to acknowledge the important role played by the numerous institutions, speakers and delegates who were involved in the delivery and administration of three workshops as part of the training programme for doctoral students based in United Kingdom. We extend our thanks and gratitude to Toby Haggith and the Imperial War Museum, Bryony Dixon and the British Film Institute, Lorraine Porter and the Broadway Cinema and Media Centre in Nottingham, Iestyn Hughes and the National Screen and Sound Archives of Wales, Ruth Washbrook and the Scottish Screen Archive, James Patterson and the Media Archive of Central England, and Frank Gray and Screen Archive Southeast, and University College London. Special thanks to Maire Messenger-Davies, Ian Christie, William Uricchio, Peter Kramer, Jon Burrows, Stephen Hughes, Patrick Russell, Philip Wickham, Kay Gladstone, William Fowler and David Walsh, Andreas Fickers, Giovanna Fossati, Mathew Lee, Francis Eames, Orlagh Mulcahy, Kevin Brownlow, Luke McKernan and Heida Johannsdottir.

Special thanks to Elizabeth Evans, Mark Gallagher, Julian Stringer and Anthony Smith for their support during the editorial process.

Above all, our thanks go to all the contributors of this special issue.

*Blank page*

## Introduction

*Nandana Bose, University of North Carolina Wilmington, and Lee Grieveson, University College London*

In January 2009, doctoral students from across the United Kingdom, archivists, and scholars gathered in London for the third and final time to discuss and debate the use of archives in their interdisciplinary study of moving images. What did an archive represent, both materially and symbolically, to researchers from fields as diverse as archaeology, communications, gender studies, history of medicine, and film and media? How could moving images held in archives be utilized in interdisciplinary research?

The closing graduate conference was the culmination of a two year programme funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, led by Roberta Pearson and Lee Grieveson, with the collaboration in particular of the Imperial War Museum (IWM) and the British Film Institute (BFI). The events were held at the IWM, the BFI, Broadway Cinema in Nottingham, and at UCL. Collectively, archivists, graduate students, and faculty reflected on the nature and intent of archival research and how archival resources could be utilized in a plethora of ways, and treated as an object of academic study through multiple, cross-disciplinary approaches. These events were unique opportunities to foster dialogue between archivists and academics about archival holdings, practices, and usages, and to address broader questions on the nature and function of archives and moving images. Various issues and challenges encountered by students highlighted the need to address questions of accessibility (for example, catalogues, format, intellectual copyright, facilities), and preservation and restoration of archival holdings at national and private institutions located in the U.K. and beyond, in countries such as France, Brazil, India and Mozambique.

Wider conceptual questions presented themselves also. Archives are spaces of history. The attention to the past – and to the present and future of that past – makes the archivist, necessarily, a historian, and one always alive to the complex enmeshing of the past and the present. The photographic image, moving or not, can itself be interpreted as an archive of the everyday, since the indexical trace of objects makes the image one of pastness, intimately connected to historiography. Cinema is, in Bazin's enigmatic, famous and indeed moving phrase, "change mummified" (1960: 7). The foundational desire for cinema was, for Bazin, in this effort to stop the forward flow of temporal movement, "embalming the dead" (4), arresting loss, and making the past live. Archives and cinema share this goal. It is a fragile one, dangerously ephemeral.

An archive provides, as Carolyn Steedman notes, "a record of the past, at the same time as it points to the future" (2002: 81). In the archive, objects and then history itself accrue value; for the historian, the value of the objects in the archive is meaning. But often, as much meaning can be drawn from what is missing from archival holdings than from what has been preserved, calling into question the politics of preservation. Archival sites bear testament to processes of self-censorship by states that encourage the preservation of select da-

ta/footage in order to shape a partisan historiography. Thus, the archive is also potentially not just a space where we investigate objects in order to flesh out our sense of history. The archive can also be an object of our investigation itself, which can therefore enable us to consider the various ways in which history is constructed, even designed. Archives are a repository of national and communal memory. Writes Steedman, "we have to be less concerned with History as *stuff* ...than as *process*, as ideation, imagining and remembering" (67).

Much recent scholarly work across disciplines has looked to archives as sites—and, as Steedman suggests, as processes—that help us understand how disciplines, media forms, and identities are constructed. The articles gathered together here span various disciplines, joined by an engagement with moving images, by a reflection on the nature of archives and archival research, and by the imperative to integrate archival research into new forms of interdisciplinary study. Various issues around moving image archives are addressed, ranging from representational questions (the access archives give us to the ways national identities are created); to methodological questions (about ephemeral materials and textual analysis); and to questions about the nature, and necessity, of new archives (for television and digital materials).

In the first section, "Archives and the Nation," Michael McCluskey considers the ways in which amateur films housed at the Screen Archive South East offer a means of analyzing the impact of technology, urbanization, and modernization on the English countryside and the nation. In the second essay in this section, Nina Schneider provides a historian's perspective on the official propaganda of the military regime in Brazil between 1968 and 1979. To do so she uses a broad range of sources such as recently opened intelligence files, opinion poll data, archive documents, and oral history interviews.

The second section, "The Ephemerality and Textuality of the Archives," examines the ephemeral and fragile nature of archived material. Lisa Stead's article draws on the wide range of extra-textual material available in film ephemera archives like the Bill Douglas Centre at the University of Exeter to address the formation of spectatorship and the response of specific gendered audiences in British silent film culture between 1918 and 1928. Heida Johannsdottir examines the extant film print of *Damaged Goods* (1919) held at the BFI, and shows that the drastically shortened print is the result not of damage or loss of reels but of a deliberate modification that reveals the imprint of the regulatory exhibition context and a medico-moral discourse on an archival text.

In the final section, "The Televisual and Digital Archive," Matt Crowder uses diverse archival sources to reveal the varied reception of the British sitcom *Yes Minister* and *Yes Prime Minister* (BBC 1980-1988). In examining the representation of construction work in and around Paris during the 1960s by French television, Jacob Paskins' research at the state television archive in Paris interrogates what it means methodologically for architectural and social history to use moving image archives as source material. Daniel Ashton analyzes digital gaming walkthroughs as archives and argues, by drawing parallels with research on film and ancillary materials, that walkthrough "archives" can be understood as repertoires for future gameplay. In doing so, he reiterates Steedman's observation that the

archive may be examined both as a record of the past and as a resource for the future.

Across the collection, then, scholars ask: how is the archive, as a repository of memory and of the past, used to construct cultural history? What can archives tell us about the formation of particular categories of identity? How can the ephemeral, like the digital, be archived? These are pressing, important questions, and we hope the varied answers here will lead to further reflection and debate upon the place of archival research in the interdisciplinary study of moving images.

### References

Bazin, Andre (1960) The Ontology of the Photographic Image, *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (Summer), pp. 4-9.

Steedman, Carolyn (2002) *Dust: the Archive and Cultural History*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.

*Blank page*

**Part I:**  
**The Archive and the Nation**

## **Amateur Film and the Interwar English Countryside**

*Michael McCluskey, University College London*

### **Introduction**

In the 1930s the English countryside faced a “threat of extinction” (Mellor, 1987: 9) as a result of urban sprawl and the influx of machines and masses. Responses to this perceived threat participated in a discourse of crisis that linked the consumption of rural landscape to the erosion of regional and national identity and, more broadly, to the deleterious effects of modernity on culture and society. To counter these effects, defenders of the English countryside (and the way of life they associated with it) argued for policies that controlled land use and access. A defence of the countryside not only entailed control of town and country planning, but also control of the people and activities allowed to enjoy what was considered the nation’s inheritance. In this “battle for the countryside” (Lowerson, 1980) between those who wanted to preserve it and those who wanted to offer it up for consumption, the battle lines were not entirely distinct. Aspects of both sides argued not for preservation and consumption strictly, but for a means of preserving social and economic hierarchies and for assuring that the land could be accessed by the right sorts of people for the right sorts of activities. Control of the land in representations of the countryside not only meant access to the land and to the people, but also meant control of the discourse about the landscape. Discussion of the landscape served as a mouthpiece for ideas of national identity and for the promotion of certain sets of values. As David Matless has argued:

the question of what landscape ‘is’ or ‘means’ can always be subsumed in the question of how it works, as a vehicle of social and self-identity, as a site for the claiming of cultural authority, as a generator of profit and space for different kinds of living. (Matless, 1998: 12)

The framing of the landscape and people of the English countryside was a way of articulating those identities and of claiming that authority. What role did film, then, and in particular, amateur film play in the framing of these debates and in the construction of a discourse that links landscape and identity? And how might interwar discussions of preservation and consumption help us to analyze cinema itself as a medium that simultaneously consumes and preserves?

### **Amateur Film: Act and Artifact**

The BBC Four series *The Thirties in Colour* (first broadcast July 2008) draws almost exclusively on amateur film footage shot mostly abroad to consider Britons’ responses to international events throughout the decade. Amateur films provide more than just a visual record of particular people and places at particular moments in time, however. They are particular instantiations of the issues and ideologies of the filmmakers that produce them and the cultures in which they are created. In her introduction to *Mining the Home Movie*, Patricia Zimmermann



states that “amateur film artifacts present a materialization of the abstractions of race, class, gender, and nation as they are lived and as a part of everyday life” (Zimmermann, 2008: 4). Amateur films from the 1930s, then, not only can help to untangle issues of preservation and consumption in contemporary discourses of landscape, but also can reveal processes of control over physical and mental space and over national resource and national identity.

In this article I discuss interwar amateur films of the English countryside to consider both the act of filmmaking and the artifacts such a process creates. I chose to consider films from the Screen Archive South East to help in this process of analysis because the dominant representation of the countryside during the 1930s was of southern, agricultural England. Thus, I use the term “English” countryside pointedly; it was primarily the English countryside that was discussed, debated and represented, and it was predominantly the countryside of Southern England. Sussex and Kent in particular featured in many discussions and representations, and Sussex was the setting for one of the most well known satires of the romanticization of rural England, Stella Gibbons’ *Cold Comfort Farm* (1932). The Screen Archive South East, based at the University of Brighton, is one of several regional media archives that preserve and provide access to screen material related to a specific region of Britain. The eighteen amateur films from the 1930s in the Screen Archive South East collection range from five to thirty-five minutes and were shot on mainly 16 mm and 9.5 mm film (two films were shot on 35 mm). The filmmakers were mostly middle-class and, as far as is known by the archive, were all men. Their films were shared at local cine clubs, groups organized by and for film enthusiasts who also shared their experiences and learned techniques through publications such as *The Amateur Film Maker*, a periodical that began publication in 1928, and *Amateur Cine World*, which began circulation in 1934. While the films in this collection are certainly not exhaustive in their depictions of country life, they do offer a range of subjects and styles for a discussion of amateur film as both a process and a product of its time and location.

Amateur filmmaking is a means of asserting a regional identity. The films offer a series of images of what the filmmakers working in rural Sussex and Kent thought was important about the areas in which they lived. Bill Nichols in *Representing Reality* describes how amateur films “can be viewed as ethnographic evidence of the kind of events deemed filmworthy and the modes of self-presentation regarded as normal (for commemoration before a camera) within a given culture” (Nichols, 1991: 160). What was deemed filmworthy for these film enthusiasts were scenes of farming, the celebration of village festivals, the passing of the seasons, and studies of local flora and fauna. A movie camera and a keen filmmaker beg for something to be filmed, and the focus in many of these films turns to what seem readily available subjects: the landscape, people at leisure, agricultural labor and local traditions. Of course, in viewing these films we must also ask: for whom were these subjects available? And how readily? The films preserve moments in time that are specific to the village or county in which they are filmed: May Festivals in Egerton, hop-picking in Kent, the working life of Elsted Manor Farm. But the films do more than preserve these moments; they offer ways of viewing these moments, ways of viewing shaped by access to film, to perhaps other equipment, and to the subjects presented within the films.

Thus, these amateur films can be seen as social documents that reveal relationships that exist within this particular region: relationships between people, between people and land and between the people of this region and those of the nation. The films also present moments of national celebration (such as the Silver Jubilee of George V's reign) and, indeed, moments of everyday life that are not necessarily county or village-specific. The national events, celebrated and filmed locally, provide the opportunity for the filmmakers to visualize connections between these local communities and the nation. These particular films emblemize processes of citizenship by setting scenes of national allegiance within the framework of local economy; the produce of the region is put on display in the local interpretation of a national event. In the film *Our Village* (1935), for example, the links between national identity and local landscape materialize in the planting of a tree to mark the 25th anniversary of the coronation of George V. Some films, as I discuss below, link the local landscape to the traditions of British literature and folk music by using excerpts from poems and songs as intertitles. These intertitles not only make connections between the scenes presented in the film and those celebrated by English poets of the past, but also suggest that the poet and the filmmaker, though separated by time, are linked through their interpretations of the landscape and people around them, an interpretation that aestheticizes local events and transforms them into timeless celebrations of English life.

The films also draw attention to the challenges of working with moving-image archives. All of the screen material in this particular archive relates to the history of the southeastern area of Britain; however, the amateur films, as well as the lantern slides and videotapes, offer insights into the history and culture of the nation as a whole. The filmmakers, dates and subjects of the films in this collection are clearly identified, yet these often very brief films retain a sense of ambiguity that allows them to be placed in a number of different contexts. They raise questions regarding the circumstances of their production and distribution, as well as questions regarding their content. Who or what are the subjects of the films? How do distinctions between foreground and background sharpen or blur when the films are placed in dialogue with other representations? This ambiguity allows the films to be placed within a variety of contexts, but reading them in any one occludes the connections that might be made through other approaches. So, while the films from the Screen Archive South East offer rich material with which to examine their interplay with other representations of the countryside, they also raise issues of class and gender, of labor and leisure, and of technology and tradition that I touch upon, but only within the parameters that I have set as a means of discussing both the films and the period. In other words, I acknowledge here the control that I exert over the films in my discussion of how this footage can help to reveal processes of control in representations of the countryside throughout the 1930s.

### Control of Access

One particular scene of a film from the Screen Archive South East collection brings together many of the issues of control over the land. The film, titled *People and Places* and dated "1930s," was produced by Lancelot House, a solicitor and amateur filmmaker whose films are now part of the collections of the

Imperial War Museum and the BFI National Film and Television Archive. An intertitle introduces the scene: "Near Eridge; Beryl Standen, John Kitchen and some cows." The names of the participants and of the location provide some familiarity with the subjects, while also reminding us that they are unfamiliar to us. The film controls the information we are given. We also see how film, and more broadly modernity, can intrude on country life. The camera is positioned just off a winding country road. Around a bend, trees swaying gently behind, a motorcar enters the scene, pulls to the side of the road, and stops some thirty-feet just in front of where the camera has been positioned. Beryl and John leave the car, step onto the grassy bank and stop at a fence that separates the road from the hillside of grazing cows. They have a cigarette and a chat, looking to the field and back to each other, then the scene ends. The filming enacts the performance; Beryl and John might have stopped for a cigarette in this location anyway, but it seems like a staged event, one that would not exist if it were not to be filmed. The way the scene is filmed raises issues of access and of preservation and consumption. The filming of the motorcar's arrival presents the image of a machine intruding on the otherwise quiet, rustic scene as suggested by the copse of trees. However, the curve of the road indicates an affinity for the natural landscape; it suggests a boundary around this bit of countryside rather than a point of access into it. The fence continues this separation of natural landscape and modern machinery. Additionally, of course, the fence also distances the people from the land and the animals that occupy it. The road and the fence channel machines and people through the landscape but do not allow them to interact with it. The countryside, then, in this scene, is presented as façade: a flattened surface that offers an image of landscape. The couple stop to consider the image as though it were a painting from some private picture gallery. The land has been preserved for them, as have the cows, and the couple is filmed in an act of consumption though not of interaction.

The scene illustrates the idea of being in the countryside but not interacting with it, something other representations promoted in their depiction of the countryside and visitors to it. The image of the countryside as the pure, peaceful heart of Britain depended on a landscape free of motorcars, petrol stations and touristy teashops. If motorists, cyclists, hikers and ramblers could not be kept out of the countryside, at least they could be kept to the roads and paths and not allowed to infiltrate the landscape itself. The benefits of such limited access, however, were described by writers such as J. B. Priestley. In his introduction to *Beauty of Britain* (1935), Priestley notes that "with some types of landscape there is a definite gain simply because you are moving so swiftly across the face of the country" (Priestley, 1935: 3).

In this description of the benefits of motoring through certain landscapes, Priestley also presents the landscape as façade: it is a screen of swiftly moving images, a face to be traversed rather than a body to be penetrated. Moreover, the speed of the motorcar draws out the features of the countryside: the rolling hills, the patchwork of fields, the network of hedges. Speed, mobility and a certain distancing from the landscape are highlighted here as enticing ways to consume country views without actually intruding upon the landscape itself. The painter Paul Nash also connects speed, distance and aestheticized landscape in the *Shell Guide to Dorset* (1936):

A visitor to Dorset hurrying across this moor may be impressed by its personality, may halt, perhaps, to lunch by the side of the road, may be fortunate enough to see the adder glide into the furze; or detect the pine hawk-moth, cunning facsimile of the bark it rests upon. He may feel an inkling of that enchantment which lies about him. But it is not given to strangers to know the Heath anymore than 'foreigners' can understand the Romney Marsh; at least, that is the conviction of the native. (Nash, 1936: 12)

The visitor is welcome to look on the countryside from a distance, but there is no need to penetrate this image; unless you are a "native," you will not be able to understand its subtle beauty anyway. Nash notes that this is the "conviction of the native," and his comment suggests that he has a different view of access to the countryside. But, he claims, "hurrying across the moor" can draw out the personality of the landscape. The descriptions of Nash and Priestley both describe the benefits of seeing a moving landscape framed by the window of a motorcar. They gesture to the ways in which modernity affects our experience of landscape, but not necessarily for the worse. However, the experience relies on a distance between subject and object: a distance between man/machine and landscape that allows for a consumption of views but limited access to rural land.

### Control of Time

To those concerned with the seemingly increased pace of life brought on by industrialization, celebration of the countryside was a way not only to celebrate a perceived slower pace of life, but also to criticize the developments in technology that fomented such a change. In their 1933 treatise *Culture and Environment*, F. R. Leavis and Denys Thompson lament how the process of industrialization had destroyed traditional labor and the traditional social hierarchy of the village. To counter the rapid developments of industrialized society, they choose to celebrate the organic community of village England and, in particular, the forms of labor of this rural way of life. Such labor as they describe takes nearly the entire day to complete, but it is so rewarding that there is no need for leisure time. Romanticization of hard labor barely masks their contention that there are those who should do manual work and those for whom intellectual work is reserved.

Forms of agricultural labor appear in nearly half of the films in the Screen Archive South East collection. Fieldwork, plowing, cutting and binding wheat were readily available and accessible activities as long as the owner of the land allowed the filmmaker to bring his camera into the fields. Several representations of agricultural labor in the 1930s tended to romanticize the plowman and work such as the harvesting of wheat. Even A. G. Street, a farmer and a writer and broadcaster on countryside issues throughout the 1930s and 1940s, called plowing "the most charming disguise work can wear" in his commentary for the 1938 film *English Harvest*, directed by Humphrey Jennings. But the issue is more complex than the romanticization of certain forms of labor, more than the relegation of the farm worker to the pastoral tradition. It might be easy to accuse some of these films of romanticizing forms of agricultural labor, but it is perhaps

more interesting to consider how the depiction of rural labor might resonate with this attempt to capture time seen in other representations from the 1930s. Filmmakers in rural Sussex and Kent produced several films that linger over the many types of agricultural labor as a means of slowing their own lives in a decade full of accounts of fast cars, fast planes and fast living. The film *Our Daily Bread* (1938), produced by John and William Barnes, opens with an intertitle that features an excerpt from the traditional folk song, "To Be a Farmer's Boy":

To plough and sow, to reap and mow  
And be a farmer's boy, and be a farmer's boy.

The intertitle frames the work that follows as being more a part of living history than of contemporary labor. In one scene, the camera tracks the movement of a plow across a field. While this is not an unusual image for any representation of the countryside of the period, what is unusual is the length of time devoted to this action. A horse's head enters the frame from the right followed by the plow and plowman, and the scene continues for two minutes. It is a willing and almost purposeful contradiction of the fast-travelling motorcars and fast-producing factories that proliferated in the decade. Neither the plowman nor the filmmaker nor the viewer is going anywhere fast.

In this film, the Barnes brothers might romanticize certain forms of farm labor, but they also draw our attention and our time to aspects of a way of life we might not have observed, and, more importantly, perhaps, that contemporary viewers of the film might not have considered. If this type of labor is not appreciated by the audience, then, at the very least the film provides the viewer with a pause. The minimal editing in this film in particular means that the viewer watches the laborer work for long stretches of time. Of course, class issues are raised, as those who actually perform this work would perhaps not be so eager to view such extensive studies of labor. The control of time, we are reminded, is not in the hands of the working class. The laborers in the film do not have the leisure time to film the work of others.

### **Control over Representation**

The countryside had virtually lost its importance to the nation as a supplier of food by the 1930s, with imports of wheat from the United States and ham from Denmark being just two of the commodities that were now imported rather than supplied by British farm workers. Agriculture was only one aspect of the countryside, however. The many representations of the countryside throughout the 1930s indicate the number of ways such an arbitrary and diverse area, way of life and mindset could be framed. The amateur films do not purport to represent all of rural Britain; they focus on their local area and resist the idea of any one "countryside" that might possibly represent the entire nation. In his essay "Rural Industries and the Image of the Countryside" (Bailey, 2006), Christopher Bailey argues that this emphasis on regional identity was a source of renewal for rural areas facing decline in the interwar period. Part of that renewal stemmed from the production of local crafts and from the celebration of local traditions. Local filmmaking might also be seen as part of a form of renewal for certain areas and not just a means of preserving what was disappearing.



The regional identity that the films in the Screen Archive South East collection assert also resists the representation of the countryside as an imaginary place, one that exists only in such representations. Writing in 1932, J. B. Priestley describes “the country that has always existed in our imagination” (Priestley, 1932: 122). Amateur filmmaking represents a process of constructing an identity, of taking the countryside that exists in the mind and putting it into a form that can be shared with others. This representation can capture shared moments and shared traditions; nevertheless, it is one film’s construction of a countryside among many possible others. The film *Our Daily Bread* includes a sequence that foregrounds this idea of construction. In the sequence, four shots show laborers working with their hands: sharpening, picking, stripping, and binding. The camera captures several different tasks and lingers over the different acts with close-up shots of the hands at work repeated throughout the sequence. But the focus on the hands indicates the non-mechanized form of this labor. The images highlight the skill of the human worker in an age when the machine was widely seen as infallible, and preferable to the perceived inconsistencies of human labor. More importantly, the sequence foregrounds the acts of construction and manipulation. It draws attention to the act of filmmaking itself and asserts the primacy of the filmmaker, the craftsman, in this construction of meaning.

The films in the Screen Archive South East collection show how these amateur filmmakers might be more inclusive in their construction of certain regional identities in comparison to the more widely produced representations. Another film from the Barnes brothers, *With the Gypsies in Kent* (1939), documents the activities of the Roma people, a population absent from many of the representations of the countryside of the 1930s. In one scene, the camera tracks a caravan as it moves slowly down the high street of a Kent village. The slow movement of the caravan echoes the slow progression of the plow across the field in *Our Daily Bread*. The film forces the viewer to consider the Roma as a part of the daily life of the countryside during the harvest season. It does not necessarily depict the Roma as members of the community; in fact, the caravan proceeding through the village could be seen as a spectacle that draws the camera’s attention because it is not an everyday occurrence. Whether the image of the Roma caravan is presented as an everyday occurrence or an exotic spectacle might not necessarily be of concern to the researcher, however. The film documents life in a particular place at a particular time, and any image included in the film might be used in an analysis of that time and place. However, the construction of the filmmaker cannot be so easily ignored. The amateur film should not be considered a deposit of images that can be strip-mined to bolster certain arguments. The filmmaker had his reasons for selecting certain material, and the act of filming itself complicates the distinction between what is an everyday activity and what is a disruption of the status quo. These films must be seen as evidence of a process of selection and assembly. Any analysis, then, must recognize this assembly process in a discussion of the images the film product contains.

### **Preservation, Consumption and Cinema**

In *Village England: A Social History of the Countryside* (2004) Trevor Wild describes the ways in which modernity threatened the status quo of rural England.

However, he does not address how film and filmmaking were forces that brought about an intrusion into countryside living. I want to be clear here and emphasize that this was not only an activity of outsiders. By intrusion, I do not mean that they were outsiders coming into the countryside and disrupting life. I mean that the filming of events by those who lived in the countryside and those who were visiting was an intrusion on any part of daily life that someone might choose to film. In an essay on home movies the filmmaker Péter Forgacs describes the home moviemaker as lying somewhere between “the citizen and the voyeur” (Forgacs, 2008: 51). He is informed about the world around him and is most likely free to interact with others and within situations he observes, but he uses that access to direct a camera and, through it, stare at others. He wants to record something, to preserve it, but simultaneously, he eschews participating in the moment in order to film it, to use it in the creation of some representation of the situation.

Preservation and consumption are simultaneous in the act of filmmaking. In three films the amateur filmmaker Ernest “Spot” Botting presents a video record of the Egerton May Festivals from 1935, 1936 and 1937. The films show a procession of children against a backdrop of those gathered to watch the event that culminates in the crowning of the May Queen. These moments are preserved for participants of the event to watch and for later generations and historians of the Kent village to consider. In each film, Botting’s camera pans over the crowd of proud parents and other observers. The movement of the camera across the faces of those gathered suggests that the filmmaker is not just a citizen of the village on these days; he is a voyeur watching the event and its audience. The film then not only records the May Festivals, but also captures the act of recording itself, an act that preserves the event and those in attendance for those on screen as well as others to watch after the fact. In order to preserve this moment it must be consumed, made into a commodity that can be shared post-production. And this film as a product offers a means of documenting change in the village, the villagers and, perhaps, changes in the celebration of the May Festival itself. The act of filming provides an artifact that can be studied and compared with others to observe change.

These amateur films offer instances of what André Bazin termed “change mummified” (Bazin and Gray, 1960: 8). They record moments in time, but moments shaped by the camera itself. Thus, film presents only fragments of a totality of experience, and what appears in the film are indexical traces of that totality. In these amateur films of the countryside, then, we see not only evidence of people and places, but also indications of the way those people and places interacted with each other and with the camera that participated in those interactions. Moreover, the indexical trace film provides suggests broader cultural issues and attitudes that may have also shaped those interactions: issues of class and gender, and attitudes toward land use and access.

## Conclusion

Amateur film presents material useful for a study of social history. The process of filmmaking highlights many of the issues involved in the construction of representations of the land and people, and helps to reveal the way those repre-

sentations can serve as a discourse for broader issues. These films invite a process of interaction with other representations in order to help us understand their meaning; their ambiguity emboldens us to put their images into play within various frameworks to see what can be revealed in them and in the different contexts in which they might be deposited.

I recognize that the films I discuss have been taken out of context, removed from the process and the product with which they were created and put into dialogue with other representations also ripped from their sources. This is one of the benefits and challenges of working with moving images: they can be cut up and re-presented. But precisely because they can be cut up, because they can be extracted and placed into new situations to reveal new meaning, it is important to explore the ramifications of such projects and also to acknowledge the control over the material that such projects necessarily entail.

## References

Bailey, Christopher (2006) Rural Industries and the Image of the Countryside, in Paul Brassley, Jeremy Burchardt and Lynne Thompson (eds.), *The English Countryside Between the Wars*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, pp. 130-150.

Bazin, Andre and Hugh Gray (1960) Ontology of the Photographic Image, *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (Summer, 1960), pp. 4-9.

Forgacs, Péter (2008) Wittgenstein Tractatus, in Karen Ishizuka and Patricia Zimmermann (eds.), *Mining the Home Movie*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 47-56.

Lowerson, John (1980) Battle for the Countryside, in Frank Gloversmith (ed.), *Class, Culture and Social Change*. Brighton: Harvester Press, pp. 260-280.

Matless, David (1998) *Landscape and Englishness*. London: Reaktion.

Mellor, David (1987) Editor's Preface, in David Mellor (ed.), *A Paradise Lost: The Neo-Romantic Imagination in Britain 1935-55*. London: Lund Humphries in association with the Barbican Art Gallery, p. 1.

Nash, Paul (1936) *Shell Guides to the Counties: Dorset*. London: Architectural Press.

Nichols, Bill (1991) *Representing Reality*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Priestley, J. B. (1935) Introduction to Charles Bradley Ford (ed.), *The Beauty of Britain*. London: B.T. Batsford, pp. 1-7.

Priestley, J. B. (1932) The Toy Farm, in *Self-Selected Essays*. London: Heinemann, pp. 122-24.



Wild, Trevor (2004) *Village England: A Social History of the Countryside*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Zimmermann, Patricia (2008) The Home Movie Movement: Excavations, Artifacts, Minings, in Karen Ishizuka and Patricia Zimmermann (eds.), *Mining the Home Movie*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 1-28.

## Critical Reflections on Film as a Historical Source: A Case of the Military Regime in Brazil

*Nina Schneider, University of Essex*

### Introduction

The relationship between historians and film has been difficult. The first step for historians was to recognize film as a worthwhile source to study, a process which started in the 1960s. Paul Smith's *The Historian and Film*, published in 1976 (Smith, 1976) was the first publication in the English language on this topic and has been regarded as a milestone (Jackson, 1977: 713). By then, films were generally accepted as additional evidence with the potential to elucidate incidents in the past (Pronay, 1983: 366). This development was related to general historiographical changes, in the course of which historians increasingly opened up to alternative sources – most importantly, the influence of cultural relativism. Cultural relativism rejects what historians wrongly name "Rankean History," a history that is "fact"-based and "objective" in the pursuit of "historical truth" (Burke, 1995: 3, 5-6). Today, historians regard historical writing as "bias" and "opposing voices," for, as Burke puts it, "every historian reflects reality indirectly depending on his culture" (Burke, 1995: 5-6). In particular, postmodernism has drawn upon these thoughts and questioned the idea of historical knowledge as a coherently understandable past. The skepticism formerly shown towards films has been transferred to traditional sources including archive documents. The historian Robert A. Rosenstone has promoted postmodern historical films as supplementary sources to "traditional written" history (Rosenstone, 1995). Thus, historiographical developments have contributed to establishing films as historical sources.

Smith's landmark publication arguably initiated a second transformation in the relationship between historians and films. Subsequently, the decisive question was not so much *whether* to use films, but *how* to use them as sources (Jackson, 1977: 713; Pronay, 1983: 366). Historians started pondering films' specific characteristics, and how to differentiate between "factual" and "fictitious" films given the power of both in forming attitudes (Pronay, 1983: 369). They wondered which methods, cinematographic skills and additional sources were needed (Pronay, 1983: 370, 392). Scholars today continue reflecting on how to read films as sources, what methods to choose, and what additional material to consult. The aim of this article is to reflect critically upon what film sources can deliver, and to what extent the availability of sources besides the film material determines our analytic method and conclusions. As such, it addresses not only historians, but a wider audience.

This study refers to the official propaganda during the military regime in Brazil, 1968-79. An important goal is to illustrate the broad range of additional sources consulted for this project, and to report on the challenges in finding and interpreting this material. In the case of the military regime in Brazil, many sources are supposedly missing. Yet even in this difficult case, many sources can be lo-

cated. The main body of sources here are oral history interviews with former propaganda personnel. Special emphasis is put on the "intention" of the propagandist. The intention forms an important characteristic of the rather broad propaganda definition used in this article. Propaganda, I propose, is a deliberate attempt by a power to strengthen, alter or form public opinion through the monopolization and transmission of ideas and values. These ideas might be rational or irrational, and epistemologically true or false. Based on this propaganda definition, this study will demonstrate that besides the films themselves, it is vital to use further sources elucidating the production context of propaganda and, ideally, its reception. The reception of propaganda during the military regime has never been investigated before. What follows in this piece will give a short introduction to the nature of military rule, literature on the regime's propaganda, and the research questions of my project.

### **The Nature of the Regime and Propaganda Research**

During the 1960s and 1970s, military regimes seized power in nearly the whole of Latin America. The military regime in Brazil (1964-1985) was long, and ended with a slow and "peaceful" transition. In contrast to Chile or Argentina, Brazil was ruled by five different military presidents and not a single dictator. Although the exact numbers are debated, a Brazilian Special Commission estimated that 474 people died and disappeared in Brazil, whereas in the Argentinean case human rights organizations talk of 30,000 (Secretaria Especial dos Direitos Humanos, 2007: 17; Aquino, 2000: 271). One of the prime characteristics of the military regime in Brazil was the internal division into different military camps (Fico, 2003: 30). As a problematic but useful heuristic categorization, scholars distinguish between "hardliners" (*linha dura*) and "moderates." "Hardliners," on the one hand, supported repression and wanted the military regime to continue (Stepan, 1973: 18, Fico, 2001: 23). They rejected a liberal democracy but used its rhetoric (Skidmore, 1988: 108). "Moderates," on the other hand, were also authoritarian, but in principle rejected repression. They furthermore regarded military rule as a transitory phase with the ultimate goal to hand over power to civilians (Castro, 2006: 4). The Brazilian military regime is an expanding field of historical research. Important primary sources including those of the former intelligence unit SNI have been made available only recently, and many documents are still missing. Whereas some aspects (censorship, left-wing resistance) have been well-studied, the official propaganda remains under-researched (Fico, 1997: 16).

The few existing studies on propaganda during the military regime in Brazil (Garcia, 1990; Assis, 2001) are predominantly Marxist and operate with oversimplified notions of a "dominant class." Garcia argues that the upper-class used the regime's propaganda-machine as an instrument to spread its ideology (Garcia, 1990: 38). Similarly, the journalist Denise Assis argues in her non-academic book that pre-coup propaganda (1962-64) was organized by the upper class, who defended its homogenous ideology (Assis, 2001: 15-16). Although the question of which social groups were behind propaganda is valuable, this interpretation is simplistic not only because of the stereotypical use of "class." Firstly, the Armed Forces often had a different agenda than the political or economical elites (Diniz, 1994). But even more importantly, these accounts neglect that the

military regime was divided into a hardliner and a moderate camp. In sum, simplistic Marxist approaches to propaganda in Brazil have failed to consider the diverse interests among the Armed Forces, the economic and political elites.

Apart from these reductionist Marxist approaches, Maria L. M. Galetti investigates propaganda volume and content between 1968 and 1979. However she uses propaganda film catalogues and not the films themselves (Galetti, 1980). The best propaganda study of the regime is written by the Brazilian historian Carlos Fico. He takes a new cultural history approach and examines how the propaganda manipulated recurrent cultural images following Eric Hobsbawm's work on the "invention of tradition" for national and colonial projects. Although Fico is the first scholar who reconstructs the problems between AERP personnel and hardliners, he ultimately does not distinguish between the factions when arguing that they shared the same propaganda intention to cover up repression. In sum, scholars have neglected to investigate the propaganda reception, its overall function within the system, and have ignored or simplified the internal division of the regime into hardliners and moderates. Focusing on the hardline President Médici (1969-1974) and the moderate Geisel (1974-1979), the aim of my project is to elucidate and compare how the official propaganda was planned, produced and received. Decisive questions are whether this propaganda qualifies as "political propaganda" or rather as "civic education," whether intra-military frictions are apparent in the propaganda system or the propaganda "text" itself, and what the overall function of propaganda is in stabilizing military rule. Moreover, I ask in what way the propaganda of the AERP/ARP shaped Brazilian society in the short and long term.

### **The Propaganda of the Military Regime**

Propaganda was not officially institutionalized in Brazil straight after the coup. It was only in 1968 when students, workers and progressive Catholics protested against the regime in São Paulo and Rio, that an official propaganda institution was finally founded, the AERP, Special Public Relations Consultancy (Decree no. 62.119). Between 1969 and 1973 the AERP was led by Colonel Octávio Costa, who set up the principles for the AERP propaganda. The successor organ of the AERP, the so-called ARP (Public Relations Consultancy), largely maintained Costa's principles. Thus, the mastermind of the propaganda concept between 1969 and 1979 was Colonel Costa. Besides similarities between the AERP and ARP in terms of strategy, there was a crucial continuity concerning the staff. A former AERP official and friend of Costa, Colonel José Maria Toledo Camargo, later became the leader of the ARP.

The AERP/ARP's most important and innovative means of propaganda were radio and television spots (Costa, 1970: 9, Garcia, 1990: 78). Quantitatively, radio was still the most accessible media for the majority of the population (Mattos, 1982: 130-31). Although television predominantly reached the middle and upper class who could afford a television set, it was growing rapidly (Interview Costa, 2 March 2007). Oral-history interviews with former AERP officials and witnesses of the time suggest that short films were of particular importance. They were popular, and unlike radio propaganda, are often remembered vividly today (Fico, 1997: 103-4). Therefore, although radio spots were quantitatively the most sig-

nificant propaganda channel, short films were frequently more important qualitatively, and this is why they form my study's main body of propaganda sources. The National Archives in Rio de Janeiro holds a rich section of film material including newsreels, and educational films (Fundo Agência Nacional, Code EH, Section CODES). Under the label educational films, the Archive holds 99 AERP/ARP propaganda short films. During a research trip to Brazil, I furthermore was able to copy the annual production catalogues from the former AERP/ARP leaders. The catalogues list the film titles, year of production and voice-over text of each film. This enabled me to compare the archive films with the catalogues and in most cases find out the basic production details of each short film.

## Propaganda Analysis Methods

Locating films and getting the permission to copy them is only the very first step. Methodological questions on how to analyze the material follow, and this in turn depends on the concept of propaganda applied. I suggest considering two levels of analysis: the "perspective" and the "time-level." Firstly, researchers need to decide from predominantly what perspective they want to examine the medium: that of the producer, the actual film text, or the reader. In 1983, the Director of Studies at the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes* in Paris, Marc Ferro, pointed to the interrelatedness between artist, industry, the film itself and society (Ferro, 1983: 359). Setting events or aspects into their historical contexts is what historians are specifically trained for. Most propaganda studies write either on the production, the text or the reception, thereby artificially dissecting a relation which forms a whole. Reductionist Marxist studies tend to overemphasize who controls the production, thereby underestimating the audience's agency. Studies focusing on the film text itself contribute to an aesthetic and artistic understanding of a film corpus but lack the dimension of power and the ability to explain the larger social and cultural significance of films. Rejecting such a dissection in ways similar to Ferro, the sociologist Gerd Albrecht demands in his major study on Nazi feature films that propaganda analyses should consider the whole process from designer to recipient (Albrecht, 1969). My original intention has been to link this holistic approach of propaganda with theories on identity formation and memory, which have shifted the focus from ideological persuasion of elites to the notion of self-construction of identity.

A second layer of analysis linked to the perspective is the dimension of time, the prime category that distinguishes history from other disciplines. Historians analyze developments and look for continuities and changes, preferably in somewhat causal relations. However, the problem of film, as of any other cultural symbol, is that a clear-cut notion of time dissolves. Films can be regarded as products and creators of culture. This resonates with Anthony Giddens's concept of structuration (Giddens, 1984). Giddens suggested that scholarship should not focus exclusively on social structures nor on individual agency, but should instead analyze their interrelatedness by examining "social practices ordered across space and time" (Giddens, 1984: 2). This dual time-level has also been incorporated by more recent approaches to the film text, which is no longer conceived of as fixed, but as partially constructed by the recipient who gives meaning to the text while reading it (Simpson and Pearson, 2001: 366-371). My aim has been to reconstruct in what way propaganda elements were used by Brazili-

ans to (re-) construct their identities. Thus, I tried to establish to which degree propaganda functioned as a “creator” and not as a “product,” or in other words, to what extent propaganda was successful in shaping Brazilians in a desired way or not.

New theories have changed the meaning of the film text and the concept of propaganda. Formerly, scholars such as Siegfried Kracauer (1984) feared propaganda as an all-powerful and dangerous tool of manipulation for the malleable and passive masses. The Frankfurt School, which shifted researchers’ attention to the cultural industry, similarly overemphasized the might of media ownership. In the 1940 and 1950s, questionnaire-based studies used the “stimulus-response” model to measure media effects, presupposing a cause-effect relationship. A prime study was Paul Lazarsfeld’s study (1944) on the 1940s U.S. Presidential elections. He discovered that a direct relation between party propaganda and voting behavior did not exist. When the stimulus-response model failed, researchers realized the complexity of media effects, and that the social and cultural environment played a crucial role. Scholars still debate the degree of freedom and constraint set by the media industry (Simpson and Pearson, 2001: 368-370). We might summarize the consensus of this discussion as follows: media producers and potential propagandists frame the text and limit its possible readings. The reader has a restricted choice of giving meaning to the film. Thus, information about the reception of films is vital to apply this approach attributing agency to the film reader. Moreover, the aspect of reception is indispensable in order to evaluate propaganda and determine its social function during the regime, which in my case was one of the prime research purposes. Both levels of analysis, the perspective and time-level, are determined by the availability of sources.

### **Sources and the Reconstruction of Reception**

More often than not, sources to reconstruct the reception of films are scarce, or completely lost. Many historians do not even try to examine propaganda reception. Firstly, it is difficult to locate sources. Secondly, since reception is a challenging field, historians need to spend precious time thinking about an appropriate method. Thus, most historians of propaganda neglect the reception and consequently conceive of films as products rather than creators of culture. They fail to advocate agency to the film reader and to grasp the wider cultural meaning of films at a specific moment in time. In the following, I will report which sources I have explored, and illustrate why in this case it is difficult to make substantial comments on film reception. Sources utilized comprise public opinion surveys, archival documents from the private Archive of President Geisel, documents of the former intelligence service SNI (National Intelligence Service), oral-history interviews with former AERP/ARP officials, qualitative oral history interviews with contemporaries, and newspaper articles.

Starting with interviews, I conducted twelve oral-history interviews in Rio de Janeiro in 2007. The small qualitative sample was divided according to gender, age and class. Thus, I conducted interviews with men, women, people who were younger and older than eighteen years at the time, slum-dwellers and middle- and upper-class Brazilians. Due to the difficulty of finding interviewees, I only



conducted a total number of twelve interviews. My main finding was that these sorts of interviews are not appropriate to reconstruct the propaganda reception of those days. Too much time has passed since, many interviewees could not remember the propaganda, and most did not even distinguish between the different military presidents. Above all, apart from a few upper- or middle-class interviewees, people were not interested in politics at all, since what mattered was the mere survival of their families. The most important results of the interviews were, first, that there was no socio-economic, gender or age pattern. Critical and sympathizing voices could be found among all groups. Secondly, the narratives told more about the present than about the past. Many interviewees, particularly, the slum dwellers told a narrative of the "golden past." At the time of the interviews, in 2007, their economic situation was difficult. But more importantly, due to wars between different drug gangs and the police, the interviewees faced violence on a daily basis. Most interviewees portrayed the military regime as a prosperous and peaceful era. Senhor Fridinan commented on the regime: "At least there was not so much chaos as there is today" (Interviewee Caitano, 19 July 2007). A rhetorically almost identical position was taken by an anonymous local politician: "There was not as much chaos as there is today" (Interviewee Anonymous, 12 October 2007). Yet, Dona Dalva regards the threat of violence as continuous when she argues: "It was exactly like it is nowadays" (Interviewee Dona Dalva, 31 August 2007). All three interviewees allude to unemployment and violence. Thus, the oral history interviews brought interesting results, yet did not directly answer my research question. Rather than giving evidence on how propaganda was received, they illustrated how economically and politically polarized Brazil is today. Brazilian society has not yet constructed a commonly accepted historical version of the military regime. It remains a controversial issue.

Besides qualitative oral-history interviews, I had hoped to find public opinion reports in the archive of the former intelligence service SNI (National Intelligence Service). These documents held by the National Archives in Brasília have only been made available in late 2005. The documentation was taken over in its original form, and can only be accessed through keyword searches. If the documents are not categorized under the exact term asked for, there are no retrievals. Various keywords including "public opinion" did not bring substantial results. The few sections in the intelligence files labeled "public opinion" summarize critical press articles, denounce opposition groups, or report about expected voting behavior near the elections. Nonetheless, this lack of documentation was a crucial finding. It proved for the first time that the Brazilian intelligence service SNI did not systematically investigate public opinion. There are other historic examples of authoritarian or even totalitarian regimes where such a vigilance system existed. Arguably, the most prominent example is the Nazi regime. The Nazis sent out spies to the cinemas who reported on how the audience reacted when seeing the films. Historians can use editions of the so-called "Meldungen aus dem Reich" (Boberach, 1984). These were monthly reports of the SD (Security Service) which regularly were sent to Berlin. Apparently, the Brazilian SNI was ill-equipped with personal and financial resources, and less professional in terms of surveillance (to the benefit of Brazilian citizens). In sum, intelligence files fail to provide evidence for public opinion on the military regime, let alone on propaganda campaigns.

Public opinion poll data is scarce, too. Before 1975 the only existing opinion poll institute in Brazil was the IBOPE whose files are currently held at the Edgar Leuenroth Archive of the University UNICAMP in Campinas, São Paulo State. The IBOPE allegedly was corrupt, conducted very few surveys, and used inconsistent methods. Furthermore, the IBOPE did not interview in the slums, and thus its polls insufficiently represent the common people. Since 1975, the U.S. opinion poll institute Gallup has been undertaking surveys that were published in the newspapers at the time and that are more trustworthy. However, they only act as very general indicators. The polls were undertaken rarely, and the questions were very unspecific, for example on the degree of happiness of the Brazilian population. Nonetheless, these public opinion polls which were frequently published in the newspapers at the time provide some general hints on public opinion, yet not on propaganda reception itself. The Gallup polls at least show that President Médici was popular among Brazilians (*Jornal do Brasil*, 6 February 1977), although paradoxically he was the most violent ruler of the whole authoritarian era. Under his successor, the more “moderate” President Geisel, Brazilians became increasingly dissatisfied with the regime.

Besides opinion poll information, for the Médici government there is a paucity of any presidential documentation. At the time, Brazilian presidents were not yet obliged to archive their official papers. Historians presume they are hidden by the Médici family. Luckily, the private archive of President Geisel has been donated to the prestigious research institute Getúlio Vargas Foundation (FGV). Some months ago, these files have even been made available online. The only promising public opinion sources here were weekly summaries of letters sent to President Geisel (FGV, CPDOC, Ernesto Geisel Pr. 1974.11.25). However, since the original letters are not available, it is a mediated and highly selective source, which is insufficient to make valid assertions about the public opinion on the regime.

What remains are oral history interviews with the AERP/ARP officials and a few newspaper articles about campaigns. All former AERP officials believe that the short films were well received (Interviews Costa, 02 March 2007, Camargo, 07 March 2007, Rabaça, 14 March 2007, Baena Soares, 20 March 2007). The predominantly positive press coverage, albeit subject to censorship at the time, seems to confirm this view. However, most articles announced rather than commented on campaigns. Two articles in the most important newsweekly *Véja* praised the new aesthetic style of official propaganda (*Véja*, 25 March 1970, pp. 81, 84, and 6 January 1971, pp. 60-1). One article even mentions that the AERP won a film prize (*Véja*, 6 January 1971, pp. 60-1). A few articles give evidence about the popularity of specific campaigns (*Jornal do Brasil*, 21 November 1972, and 1 December 1972).

In sum, while other propaganda scholars have rejected making the effort to investigate the propaganda reception of the regime, my study has meticulously located all available sources. The result is that probably the films were received rather positively, yet there is not sufficient evidence to make valid and representative comments on how the Brazilian population reacted to the official propaganda. My project will contribute with a small and hypothetical section on re-



ception primarily based on two sources, the repercussion of the films in the press and oral history interviews. Modern media-text approaches emphasizing the reader and theories on identity formation could not be applied. Arguably, historians interested in applying these film approaches are restricted to propaganda systems which systematically undertook surveys like the Nazi system or the German Democratic Republic. In any case, the general media-historical context can always be reconstructed. Thus, knowing how many Brazilians had access to television at the time already redefines the audience. Moreover, researchers can try to find sources that reflect upon films including newspaper articles or discussions in talk shows which comment on films. A more challenging approach is to analyze whether propaganda shaped other film productions as to their aesthetic characteristics or contents. In the case of the military regime, the advertising sector copied aesthetic elements of the AERP propaganda films (AERP, 1974[?]).

### The Films and Their Production

Due to the lack of reception sources, my film analysis, like most propaganda studies, focuses on the topics, ideological motives, and aesthetics of the film material, and attempts to define the level of constraint imprinted by the propagandist on the film text. In brief, the prime characteristic of the AERP/ARP short films was that they did not look like state propaganda; they neither glorified members nor programs of the military government. The films dealt with everyday topics and resembled civic education campaigns. They appealed to mothers to vaccinate their children, showed cartoon figures teaching the audience to drink filtered water to avoid illnesses, and they demanded that people economize on petrol usage during the oil crisis. The short films were highly professional as to their aesthetic look, and made use of at the time very modern filmic devices including split screens, slow motion and rewinding images. The AERP/ARP even became a trendsetter for the advertising sector which was coming of age in the 1960 and 1970s. The whole medium of TV was a novelty at the time which conveniently symbolized progress, modernity and the free market ideology—all important flagships of the regime. The apolitical topics and aesthetically innovative look contrasted with traditional political propaganda such as official newsreels, which were very clinical. Traditional propaganda had usually shown political ceremonies such as signing acts, had been accompanied by a matter-of-fact voice-over and been several minutes long. The AERP/ARP films were much shorter, mostly one minute long, had little text, normally just a moral at the end, and were all accompanied by either classic or cheerful *bossa nova* music. A particularly beautiful and entertaining series on hygiene was that of the cartoon figure *Sujismundo* (National Archive Rio, Fundo Agência Nacional, Código EH/Fil. 0733, 730, 728, 748, 751). The name is derived from the word “sujo” (dirty). *Sujismundo* always disobeys the rules; he refuses to shower, swims in the polluted river, and takes medicine without consulting the doctor. Normally, his little son warns him, *Sujismundo* does not listen, and he ends up in hospital where he is lectured by a doctor about his wrongdoings. Thus, the series sells values such as obedience, hygiene, and the notion of “civic development” in a comical and entertaining way.

Only viewing the films, they give the impression that they were designed to be

escapist, and to distract from the violence committed by the repression organs. Scholars have interpreted the AERP films in that way (Weber, 2000: 205). However, this idea gets challenged when alongside sources of the texts and their reception, those of the production process are consulted. In other words, analyzing the films alone without additional sources can lead to simplified or false conclusions. Let us exemplify how a systematic investigation of the propaganda makers can lead to new conclusions concerning the wider meaning of films. In my case, research questions included *who* were the propagandists, *what* were their intentions and strategies, were they constrained in their work by their superiors or other forces, what exactly were their propaganda strategies, and how did they conceive of propaganda. In order to answer these questions, I gathered conference papers, newspaper articles, books, edited oral history interviews, and biographies of the leaders of the propaganda institutions, Costa and Camargo. Moreover, I researched intelligence files, documentation of the Ernesto Geisel Archive and the most important military archives, the Centre of Documentation of the Armed Forces in Brasília and Rio. Additionally, I collected and conducted oral-history interviews with further AERP/AERP officials in order to compare their accounts.

### **The Propagandists and Their Intentions**

As already mentioned, documents of the Médici government have not been preserved. Everyday administrative records of the AERP/ARP are missing. In the Archive of the Marines, I could merely locate two insignificant letters sent by AERP leader Costa. Therefore, the most important sources on the propaganda officials and their intentions were oral history interviews. Fortunately, I managed to interview the five most important members of the AERP - General Costa, General Camargo, Ambassador Baena Soares, and the professors Rabaça and Cavalieri. This enabled me in a first step to triangulate these five interviews. Particularly, General Costa and General Camargo, the leaders of the propaganda institutions AERP and ARP, were of great help. Both were in their late 80s at the time. They provided me with vital information and allowed me to copy important documents which are not preserved anywhere else; the production catalogues, the AERP manuals, the founding documents, and the final report of the AERP. On the basis of this documentation, I reconstructed how the AERP/ARP functioned and how the campaigns were planned. In the interviews, I asked questions about the intention of the campaigns and whether they classified them as propaganda. It is important to keep in mind that particularly at the time of the AERP propaganda, the state rejected any opposition against the regime, and a repression system was operating which captured, tortured and assassinated mostly left-wing guerrilla groups, but occasionally also further critics of the regime including students and journalists. In the interview, Costa proclaimed that his intention was to change the national climate and contribute to a "disarmament of spirits" and a "harmonization of positions" (Interviewee Costa, 2 March 2007). He disliked the increasing violence and his strategy was to "create a positive climate" (Interviewee Costa, 2 March 2007). All five interviewees regarded the AERP productions as civic education campaigns and not as political propaganda. They all pointed out that the AERP never praised the government and that they did not show any politicians at all.

Even though they independently gave similar answers, oral-history interviews have to be handled with great care. In order to judge to what degree the answers were biased and filtered, I triangulated them with already edited oral-history interviews of Costa (Araújo, 1994) and texts written by the officials themselves including books, biographies, newspaper articles, and conference papers. I traced conference papers of Costa at the Superior War School, a military think-tank, and analyzed his newspaper articles of the 1960/70s. As we will see, these sources confirmed Costa's proclaimed intention. Thus, primarily oral-history interviews and a range of additional sources enabled me in a first step to find out about the propagandists and their proclaimed intentions.

### **Film Production: A Field of Conflict**

As a second result, I found plenty of evidence that the propaganda strategy was disputed among different military groups. As briefly explained before, the military regime was divided into competing camps generally referred to as "moderates" and "hardliners." The production process was characterized by constant frictions between the moderate propagandist Costa and hardliners (Fico, 1997). Whereas Costa produced "social" rather than "political" propaganda, the hardliners unsuccessfully pressured him to bluntly praise the government and produce a more radical propaganda. Whereas Costa's propaganda principles were "veracity" and "no personality cult," the idea of the hardliners was excessively anti-communist and fear-creating propaganda with a violent tone, not necessarily bound to truth. Various interviews as well as documents from the former intelligence service SNI and the Ernesto Geisel Archive give proof of this. Knowing about these frictions challenges the immediate interpretation of the propaganda films that their intention was to cover up repression. Although this is out of the scope of this work, it illustrates how vital it is to have information about the production conflicts. We have seen that Costa's propaganda intentions were reflected in his speeches and articles hosted by different archives including the Superior War School Archive, the National Library, and military archives. These sources show that he defended this point of view consistently from the 1960s onwards. In the late 1960s, left-wing guerrilla groups assaulted banks and kidnapped diplomats including the U.S. ambassador Charles Elbrick. Hardliners demanded a radical response to these incidents. Costa's proclaimed intention voiced in newspaper articles at the time and in several oral history interviews was to convey peace. Even in these tense moments when hardliners promoted violence, Costa repeatedly appealed in his newspaper articles to "harmony" and "reconciliation" from both sides -- left-wing resistance groups on the one hand, and hardliners who advocated repression on the other. These articles have been compiled in his book *Mundo sem hemisfério* (Costa, [?]).

Costa was not the only one who rejected violence as a means, but interviews show that the entire AERP members critiqued violent repression which they knew about informally through hear-saying. The former AERP officials Ambassador Baena Soares and Professor Rabaça both argue that the AERP was never supporting the repression (Interviewees Baena Soares, 20 March 2007, and Rabaça, 14 March 2007). Ambassador Baena Soares argues; "In no way were we allies of the repression [...] If you stimulate patriotic feelings [...] self-confidence [...] education – then you are exactly doing the opposite" (Baena Soares, 20 March

2007). AERP official Rabaça confirms this: "We did not agree at all with that form of repression" (Interviewee Rabaça, 14 March 2007). In sum, on the basis of a variety of sources and cautiously reflecting the nature of oral-history interviews, my study questions that the intention of propagandist Costa was to cover up repression. Historiography needs to carefully differentiate between "moderates" and "hardliners" to fully understand the nature of the military regime in Brazil. Internal conflicts among different military agents on an appropriate propaganda strategy need to be more addressed. Secondly, the debate about the "intention" of propagandist Costa, illustrates that it is crucial to distinguish between intention and consequence of propaganda or films in general. It is highly likely that the consequence of his apolitical propaganda was to distract from repression. However, given his constant frictions with "hardliners," it is inadequate to equate him and his staff with the "hardliners."

## Conclusion

Taking the official propaganda of the military regime as a case study, this article has critically reflected upon the source value of films from a historian's perspective. The contribution of this article has been to illustrate the wide range of possible sources and demonstrate their importance in reconstructing the broader historical and social meaning of films. In general, this piece has suggested considering two levels of film analysis: the perspective (producer-side, film text and reader-side) and the time-level (whether the text is regarded as a creator or producer of culture). The availability of sources determines the focus of the analysis. In the case of Brazil it is a difficult task to find valid source material on the reception of propaganda. This article is the first study to examine how the propaganda of the military regime was received. It has consulted opinion-poll surveys, archival documents from the private files of President Geisel and the former intelligence service, oral-history interviews with former AERP/ARP officials, qualitative oral-history interviews with contemporaries, and newspaper articles. No valid and representative conclusions can be drawn on this basis. Yet, an important finding was that unlike in other authoritarian systems, the intelligence service SNI neither systematically investigated the reception of propaganda nor public opinion. The lack of reception sources forms one of the main challenges for historians to use films as historical sources. In contrast, a range of material was available to investigate the propagandists and their intentions: AERP/ARP documentation, annual production catalogues, oral-history interviews, biographies, conference papers, and intelligence files. This study has triangulated interview material with further sources in order to verify to what degree those interviews were trustworthy. Evidence from the production process leads to doubts whether the films were intended to cover up repression. Numerous sources demonstrate that AERP officials argued with radical officials about the appropriate propaganda strategy.

## Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank her interviewees, the National Archives in Rio de Janeiro, as well as Lee Grieveson, Nandana Bose and Roberta Pearson from the Moving Image Archives program for their kind support. This research was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the University of Essex.

### Archive material

Edgar Leuenroth Archive, Campinas, PE 08/17 (MR 256), PE 09/16 (MR 256), PE 011/15 (MR 257), PE 032/09-11 (MR 270), PE 036/01 (MR 271), PE 037/06-07 (MR 271), PE 036/01 (MR 271), PE 037/06-07 (MR 271), PE 042/01 (MR 273), PE 051/6 (MR 274), PE 053/01 (MR 275), PE 054/03 (MR 275), PE 054/07 (MR 275), PE 55/01 (MR 275), PE 60/01 (MR 277), PE 062/02 (MR 277), PE 077/03 (MR 282), PE 081/01 (MR 283), PE 082/06 (MR 284), PE 082/08 (MR 284), PE 089/04 (MR 287), PE 089/05 (MR 287), PE 093/02 (MR 288), PE 093/06 ((MR 288), PE 114/01 (MR 295), PE 114/02 (MR 295), PE 114/05 (MR 295), PE 114/06 (MR 295), PE 114/06 (MR 295), PE 114/08 (MR 295), PE 114/09 (MR 295), PE 114/11 (MR 295), PE 116/02 (MR 296), PE 120/02 (MR 297), PE 121/04 (MR 297), PE 125/01 (MR 298), PE 127/01 (MR 299), PE 127/03 (MR 299), PE 128/03 (MR 299), PE 129/01 (MR 299), PE 135/01 (MR 284), PE 135/01 (MR 301), PE 135/02 (MR 301), PE 135/07 (MR 301), PE 136/01 (MR 302), PE 136/03 (MR 302), PE 136/06 (MR 302), PE 01/01 (MR 415), PE 01/02 (MR 415).

FGV, CPDOC, Ernesto Geisel Pr. 1974.11.25.

National Archive Rio de Janeiro, Fundo Agência Nacional, Code EH, Section CODES, Boxes 45, 55, 58, 203, 475-95, 518.

National Archive Rio de Janeiro, Fundo Agência Nacional, Código EH/Fil. 0733, 730, 728, 748, 751.

### Official AERP/ARP Documentation

Brasil, Presidência da República, Assessoria Especial de Relações Públicas, *Catálogo de peças produzidas - out. 69/Mar 74* (Rio de Janeiro, 1969[?]).

Brasil, Presidência da República, Assessoria Especial de Relações Públicas, *Relatório de Comunicação social (Governo e Opinião Pública)* (Brasília: AERP, 1974[?]).

Brasil, Presidência da República, Assessoria Especial de Relações Públicas, *Catálogo de peças produzidas 1974/1975* (Rio de Janeiro, 1977[?]).

Brasil, Presidência da República, Assessoria Especial de Relações Públicas, *Catálogo de peças produzidas 1976* (Rio de Janeiro, 1976[?]).

Brasil, Presidência da República, Assessoria Especial de Relações Públicas, *Catálogo de peças produzidas 1977* (Rio de Janeiro, 1977[?]).

Brasil, Presidência da República, Assessoria Especial de Relações Públicas, *Documentos Fundamentais. Planejamento Desenvolvido* (Rio de Janeiro, 1969[?]).

## Newspapers

'Prevenildo', o irmão de 'Sujismundo', vai liderar campanha contra acidente, *Jornal do Brasil*, 21 November 1972, p. 14.

Ceará forma turma 'Sujismundo', *Jornal do Brasil*, 1 December 1972, p. 14.

Brasileiro após 9 anos deixa de ser antes de tudo otimista, *Jornal do Brasil*, 6 February 1977.

E quem comunica?, *Véja*, 25 March 1970, pp. 81-4.

Silêncio da melhor, *Véja*, 6 January 1971, pp. 60-1.

## Oral History Interviews

Interview with General Octávio Costa, Rio de Janeiro, 02.03.2007.

Interview with Prof. José Cavaleri, Rio de Janeiro, 27.03.2007.

Interview with Gen. José Maria Toledo Camargo, Rio de Janeiro, 07.03.2007.

Interview with Prof. Alberto Rabaça, Rio de Janeiro, 14.03.2007.

Interview with Prof. João Clemente Baena Soares, Rio de Janeiro, 20.03.2007.

Interview with Seu Fridinan Caitano, Rio de Janeiro, 19.07.2007.

Interview with Dona Dalva, Rio de Janeiro, 31.08.2007.

Interview with Anonymous local politician, Rio de Janeiro, 12.10.2007.

## References

Albrecht, Gerd (1969) *Nationalsozialistische Filmpolitik: Eine soziologische Untersuchung ueber die Spielfilme des Dritten Reiches*. Stuttgart: Ferdinand Enke Verlag.

Aquino, Maria Aparecida de (2000) A Especificidade do regime militar brasileiro: abordagem teórica e exercício empírico, in Daniel Aarão Reis Filho (ed.), *Intelectuais, história e política: séculos xix e xx*. Rio de Janeiro: Viveiros de Castro, pp. 271-289.

Araújo, Maria Celina de, Castro, Celso and Soares, Gláucio Ary Dillon (1994) *Os anos do chumbo: a memória militar sobre a repressão*. Rio de Janeiro: Relume Dumará.

Assis, Denise (2001) *Propaganda e cinema a serviço do golpe, 1962-1964*. Rio de Janeiro: MAUAD.



Boberach, Heinz (1984) *Meldungen aus dem Reich. Die geheimen Lageberichte des Sicherheitsdienstes der SS 1938-1945*. Herrsching: Pawlak Verlag.

Burke, Peter (1995) *New Perspectives in Historical Writing*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Cannon, John (ed.) (1988) *The Blackwell Dictionary of Historians*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Costa, Octávio (1970) *Governo e Comunicação social. C116-123-70*. Presidência da República, Escola-maior das Forças Armadas, Escola Superior de Guerra.

Costa, Octávio ([?]) *Mundo sem hemisfério*. Rio de Janeiro: [?].

Diniz, Eli (1994) Empresariado, regime autoritário e modernização capitalista, in Gláucio Ary Dillon Soares and Maria Celina de Araújo [et al.] (eds.), *21 anos de regime militar balanços e perspectivas*. Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Getúlio Vargas, pp. 198-231.

Ferro, Marc (1983) Film as Agent, Product and Source of History, *Journal of Contemporary History* 18 (3), pp. 357-364.

Fico, Carlos (2001) *Como eles agiam: Os subterrâneos da ditadura militar: espionagem e polícia política*. Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo: Record.

Fico, Carlos (1997) *Reinventando o otimismo: ditadura, propaganda e imaginário social no Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Getúlio Vargas.

Fico, Carlos (2004) Versões e controvérsias sobre 1964 e a ditadura militar. *Revista Brasileira de História*, 24 (47), pp. 29-60.

Fish, Stanley (1980) *Is There a Text in This Class?: The authority of interpretive communities*. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press.

Galletti, Maria Luiza Mendonça (1980) *Propaganda e Legitimação do poder. Brasil : 1970/1978*. Brasília: MA Thesis, University of Brasília, Department of Communication.

Garcia, Nelson Jahr (1990) *Sadismo, sedução e silêncio : propaganda e controle ideológico no Brasil, 1964-1980*. São Paulo: Edições Loyola.

Giddens, Anthony (1984) *The Constitution of Society, Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Jackson, Martin A. (1977) Review: The Historian and Film by Paul Smith, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 7 (4), pp. 713-714.

Kracauer, Siegfried (1984) *Von Caligari zu Hitler: eine psychologische Geschichte des Deutschen Films*. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp.

Lazarsfeld, P. F., Berelson, Bernard Reuben, and Hazel Gaudet (1944) *The People's Choice: How the Voter Makes Up His Mind in a Presidential Campaign*. New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce.

Mattos, Sérgio Augusto Soares (1982) Domestic and Foreign Advertising in Television and Mass Media Growth: A Case Study of Brazil. PhD dissertation, University of Texas at Austin.

Oberlaender, Ricardo (1984) *História de propaganda*. Rio de Janeiro: Shogun Editora e Arte.

Pronay, Nicholas (1983) The 'Moving Picture' and Historical Research, *Journal of Contemporary History* 18 (3), pp. 365-95.

Secretaria Especial dos Direitos Humanos da Presidência da República (2007) *Direito à Memória e à Verdade: Comissão Especial sobre Mortos e Desaparecidos Políticos*. Brasília: Secretaria Especial dos Direitos Humanos.

Simpson, Philip and Roberta E. Pearson (eds.) (2001) *Critical Dictionary of Film and Television Theory*. London: Routledge.

Skidmore, Thomas E. (1988) *The Politics of Military Rule in Brazil, 1964-95*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Smith, Anne-Marie (1997) *A Forced Agreement: Press Acquiescence to Censorship in Brazil*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Smith, Paul (ed.) (1976) *The Historian and Film*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.

Stepan, Alfred (1973) *Authoritarian Brazil: Origins, Policies, and Future*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Tulloch, John (1990) *Television Drama: Agency, Audience and Myth*. New York: Routledge.

Weber, Maria Helena (2000) *Comunicação e espetáculos da política*. Porto Alegre: Editora UFRGS.

Welch, David (1983) *Propaganda and the German Cinema: 1933-1945*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

### **Websites and Internet References**

Castro, Celso (2006) The Military and Politics in Brazil: 1964-2000. Available at: <http://www.brazil.ox.ac.uk/workingpapers/celso10.pdf> [accessed 29 May 2006]

Sennett, Alan (2005) Film as a Historical Source. Available at: <http://www.open2.net/history/primarysource.html> [accessed 10 January 2009]



**Part II:**  
**The Ephemerality and**  
**Textuality of the Archives**

## **Audiences from the Film Archive: Women's Writing and Silent Cinema**

*Lisa Stead, University of Exeter*

In constructing models of early audiences in the silent era, critical investigation has tended to posit spectatorial positions from the film text outwards. The impossibility of new ethnographic research focusing upon audiences from the silent era, out of reach of a substantial body of living memory, would seem to push us back recurrently towards a reading of audiences drawn from filmic representations. But the strength of these textual examples as evidence of the reception of everyday audiences is limited to presenting only one half of the relationship, showing us how audiences were encouraged to make sense of the films and ephemeral culture with which they engaged.

My own archival research into female audiences between 1918 and 1928 within a specific facility, The Bill Douglas Centre for the History of Cinema and Popular Culture at the University of Exeter, has sought to find a different way of approaching these methodological stumbling blocks, approaching the film text as a fluid site of representation within the nexus of early cinema-going as a larger cultural experience. This exploration of female audiences is therefore one primarily concerned with intertexts, and the cultural forces relevant to the varied circulations and production of meaning surrounding reception.

Cinema culture, more broadly, is able to raise and devalue the cinema-going act itself at different times within a network of interwoven acts of reading, writing, viewing, and speaking. In foregrounding this network as the key site of investigation, rather than a supporting subtext to the Ur-text of the film object, research within the ephemeral film archive enables us to seek out sites of an active, productive female reception across the silent era, and uncover less mediated sources of the voice of gendered audiences. In addressing archival examples of these voices, I will be discussing fan writing in magazines, fan letters and poetry, postcard and fan collectables, scrapbooks and diaries.

British cinema is therefore less a textual concept than a social one as I challenge critical perspectives which have tended to view female spectatorship as a process in which consumption is incompatible with comprehension. By uncovering traces of female audiences as consumers who in turn produce and create in their written responses to cinema culture, I shall demonstrate how women were able to discuss self-reflexively their own position as self-conscious image-consumers through the network of ephemera surrounding their cinema experiences.

The overview of my research within the ephemera archive offered here therefore seeks to highlight the importance of film memorabilia archives as distinct from those which focus on archival footage. By “ephemeral archive” I refer to that which houses books, prints, artefacts and ephemera relating to cinema history and prehistory, as opposed to archival film prints. Although many of the resources discussed can be found spread across other individual archives and special collections, I limit my discussion here specifically to the Bill Douglas Centre as representative of a unique coalescence of these materials.

The centre was founded in 1997 in commemoration of the filmmaker Bill Douglas, and foregrounds the collection of Douglas and his friend Peter Jewell, writer-producer-director Roy Fowler, and the production archive of director-producer Don Boyd, encompassing some 50,000 items from the late eighteenth century to the present day and forming the largest University library on cinema in the country. The array of materials contained within the collection offers a rich network of information about cinema-going in Britain across the history of the medium, with a particularly strong body of early-cinema resources.

Examples contained within the collection such as toy tie-ins and games, records, photographs and sheet music; star faces on biscuit boxes and bottle tops; cigarette cards, periodicals, handbills and campaign materials—all offer to the researcher a nexus of potential readings, which help to construct a fuller sense of silent cinema reception. They speak to an understanding of the early female spectator as actively engaged within a wide-ranging network of images and experiences. This network constituted an overarching idea of cinemagoing as a multi-media cultural experience which extended beyond the auditorium into a variety of popular discourses. I have looked at women’s writing within and about these materials as the linking thread across the archive in an effort to compile a body of materials that constitute a more detailed landscape of engaged and critical female reception, which at times demonstrates resistance to prescribed meanings and representations emerging from cinema culture.

Although a degree of subversive material is incorporated into fan magazine star discourse, a small degree of resistance to dictated forms of consumption and interpretation is by no means insignificant. Rather, this resistance is central to understanding the importance of what readers/viewers/consumers *do* with the objects and texts they consume in terms of lived experience. As Lorraine Gamman and Margaret Marshment have argued:

It is not enough to dismiss popular culture as merely serving the complementary systems of capitalism and patriarchy, peddling 'false consciousness' to the duped masses. It can also be seen as a site where meanings are contested and where dominant ideologies can be disturbed. (1988: 1)

This focus on users is a highly productive approach in film studies for understanding the practices of audience in terms of what Paul Willis has referred to as "living reception" (2002: 289): the necessary bringing of "living identities" (2002: 289) to consumptive and viewing practices. Resistances can function within power structures rather than directly against them—inscribed cultural meanings are received, but the text is inescapably transformed in this process of reception into an object with diverse meanings beyond the control of the producer.

### **Women and Cinema in 1920s Britain**

The 1920s is a rich era for the study of female audiences as consumers who transformed the texts they consumed in processes of secondary production. 1920s British women were subject to numerous conflicting discourses about the appropriate behavior and cultural position of the 'new woman,' which played out strongly in leisure practices and entertainment forms like the cinema, which traded precisely upon the oscillation of modern images and ideals against a traditionalist cultural background. A trip to the cinema for '20s women was part of the general excursion into the public space and part of the ongoing ebb and flow of city centre consumer leisure environment. The viewing space echoed the fluidity of the modernist cityscape outside its doors; cinema was part of the growth of movement, space, light and spectacle, intertwined with new forms of dress, communication, transport, advertising and representation.

By 1916, women made up over fifty per cent of British audiences (Sanders, 2002: 98). The industry no longer viewed the female appeal of cinema as incidental; women were the ones spending money in the picture halls, and so ever more elaborate ways of enticing the female populace to patronize the picture palaces and local flea pits were instigated by trade journals and exhibitors. No effort was spared in attempting to draw women from the home, the shops or the office into the alluring cinema space, which became increasingly luxurious across the decade. Women of all classes and backgrounds—as shoppers and shop assistants, housewives and working girls—were well educated in the practices of image consumption and public female leisure across the 1920s. Women saw themselves everywhere: encouraged to buy, encouraged to watch themselves on screen, and encouraged to emulate their glamorous filmic counterparts in advertising tie-ins, cinema-inspired fashions and fan magazine competi-

tions. But what did the women in the auditoriums, who constituted this obsessively discussed, targeted and imagined audience, have to say about their own experiences? Women's own writing about the cinema further complicates the way in which we read their reception and spectatorship.

The following extract from a fan magazine of 1919, where a female writer discusses the various women she finds in the cinema daily, offers an insight into the kind of unity that the cinema represented for women across traditional social divides, and how—beyond the marketing and the reform—cinema slotted increasingly into their everyday lives:

I started with a dear old lady aged 73 [...] 'My dear,' she said, 'I live alone in a little flat. What should I do without these cinemas? I burn no coal, no gas, while here, and I reckon I get my amusement for nothing [...] Here I get to listen to the fine band, watch my favourites act, sometimes meet you and chat.' (*Picturegoer* 1-8 Feb. 1919: 127)

The author then spots an employee in her own house, her charwoman:

She visits the cinema regularly on Mondays and Thursdays [...] we at home tease her and call her *The Scarlet Runner*. You see, she grows hotter and redder every minute when she is flying around to get her work done to be at the cinema when the door opens at three o'clock. (*Picturegoer* 1-8 Feb. 1919: 127)

An encounter with an "overworked" mother is also described, who insists she should "go mad without the pictures," explaining that domestic life is "terribly monotonous, but my joy days are Mondays and Thursdays—the days I come here" (*Picturegoer* 1-8 Feb. 1919: 127). Finally, the author turns her attention to yet another female figure, 'Miss Keys':

She has no money, no position. She is one of those people who have just 'missed love' [...] Her life is hard and lonely. She tells me that her sole interest now in life is to watch the romances on the screen [...] I betook myself to an island of empty seats where I could sit undisturbed by eating, crying, laughing and talking. What a wonderful boon to all sorts of people, I thought, are the cinemas. What romance and laughter and pleasure they bring to the very doors of those who but for the pictures would perforce lead the loneliest of dreary lives. (*Picturegoer* 1-8 Feb. 1919: 127)

The article suggests that the cinema represents a unique coalescence of women from different circles of society—to a greater degree than more class-restrictive traditional entertainment forms like the theatre and musical hall—but also that it marked the independence of each of these women representative of their class and age. Each comes to the theatre looking to be entertained in the public space, unaccompanied and independent of their prescribed domestic, marital or employment duties. The female element of the cinema-going British public represented a broad gendered audience with varied motivations for visiting the cinema, and varied responses to the representations of femininity and contemporary culture that the screen offered.

### **Women's Writing and Fan Magazines**

Exploring the wide range of fan magazines within the archive has been my primary access point into the writing of female audience members. In looking at women's writing in the silent period, these popular periodicals prove one of the richest resources for study. They offer a wealth of information about consumer discourses in the 1920s, and a unique insight into the way in which female audiences were targeted. They also provide glimpses of how women reacted to these discourses, and how they discussed and negotiated film images, both in female-written articles and interviews, and in the published fan letters contained within.

The Bill Douglas Centre holds a large collection of these magazines, which range from working-girl story papers and women's journals such as *Peg's Paper* and *Women's Weekly*, to those weekly and monthly British papers dedicated entirely to film and fan culture, such as *Picture Show*, *Girls Cinema*, *Pictures and the Picturegoer* and *Film Weekly*. The varied tone and style of these publications in itself has much to say about the wide-ranging appeal of cinema for women across a spectrum of leisure discourses interlinked in various ways. Almost all of these magazines featured space for readers' contributions in some form. Fan participation allowed readers to communicate with other female fans and cinemagoers, whilst demonstrating a shared understanding of the commercial platform through which they were speaking, suggesting in their writing that women saw these letter and poetry pages as something more than a platform purely to vocalize adoration for their favourite films.

A female reader of *Picturegoer*, for example, describes the magazine's letter pages as constituting "a delightful debating society, open to all readers" (*Picturegoer*. Aug 1928: 56). Many women were keen to establish their interest in cinema as critical and engaged, moving beyond the image of the hysterical, movie-stricken fan frequently imposed upon them in the

popular media. Another reader begins a fan letter representative of many with an assertion of her seriousness in putting pen to paper:

It has always been my opinion that continual raving in print over a favourite star is injurious to his or her interests rather than otherwise, and for that reason I have refrained from writing to you before [...] I am not a 'hysterical flapper'—I have written quite a lot of theatrical and musical criticism in my time, and I was not swept off my feet by Rudy's charms. (*Picturegoer*. Dec. 1925: 98)

Fan writing such as this debated the appeal of those films, stars and genres deemed appropriate for women or stereotypically feminine. Fans were aware of the fabricated nature of star images, yet participated in what Gaylyn Studlar has referred to as an "I-know-but-never-the-less balancing of knowledge and belief" (1996: 269). Escapist pleasure, the fantasy of imitation and the adoration of female stars is played off in fan writing against an awareness of their oversimplification and commodification, whereby fan praise is interchangeable with criticism and frustration with filmic female representations. Fan letters spurred debate and disagreement in equal measure to ecstatic praise. Women used letter pages to express their own ideas about female stardom, discussing and deconstructing particular roles or star personas whilst confessing uncritical adoration of others. They critiqued costuming and performance, yet also allowed themselves creative space to profess their pleasure in screen images and escapist narratives. The following complaint about plot resolution from a female writer in *Picturegoer* is an example of the range of issues women found space to discuss through the letters pages.

The happy ending is thrust into pictures which would be better without it [...] I am firmly convinced that picturehouse patrons do not want every story to end in this same stereotyped, unoriginal manner [...] The producer *thinks* we want that lovers' embrace at the end, and he takes precious good care that we get it. If we let him know that we prefer a change occasionally he might also oblige us. (*Picturegoer*. 24 Apr. 1929: 490)

The trade's misconception of "women's cinema" was berated frequently by female readers who found within its own consumer discourses space to express their irritation. One of the most recurrent themes of fan letters is the expression of a constant irritation with the trade's misunderstanding of female preferences, arguing that the trade were "pathetically wrong" (*Picturegoer*. Jun. 1925: 12-13) in expecting "women in the audience to prefer homely stories and domestic ventures that really satisfy their soul" (*Picturegoer*. Jun. 1925: 12-13). One such fan letter argues that:

One goes to the picture shows to be amused, not to be dragged through reels of someone's troubles, and I think when our producers realize this, and give us something lighter and brighter, they will have all the successes they, and we, desire. (*Picturegoer*. 31 Aug.-7 Sept. 1918: 234)

Another fan more forcefully asserts her views:

The type of film foisted on the long-suffering public is in need of a very drastic reform, and such reform will not be put into operation until the kinemagoer wakes up to the fact that they alone can operate the machinery which will bring us 'Better Pictures' [...] it is high time the British kinemagoer woke up to the fact that a Better Pictures League would be the all-powerful factor that could command the producer to provide the type of picture that the public really wanted—more of the beauty and romance of life. (*Picturegoer*. 19 May 1920: 568)

Although there is considerable disagreement among fans over what exactly it is that the public "really wanted"—with a clear divide between those calling for greater realism in the cinema with films "which deal frankly and truthfully with life" (*Picturegoer*. 19-23 Mar. 1918: 282), and those wanting the screen to present purely escapist fantasies enabling the viewer to be "carried away from this workaday world and its troubles" (*Picturegoer*. Sept. 1923: 66)—women of either opinion unite under the general assertion that the industry's construction of female spectatorship was both inaccurate and in need of reform.

In voicing these frustrations and recurrently asserting that reform needed to come not from within the industry itself but from a greater adherence to the influential position of the female spectator, women in turn articulated the difficulty they encountered as modern women reconciling broader cultural ideas of how they should behave, what they should desire, and how debates about their central place in new leisure discourses were recurrently provoked by these issues. Beyond voicing their irritation with "happy ending" genres and "sob stuff" plot lines, it was star images as the primary currency of film culture which provided the central platform upon which women played out their frustrations.

Women were critically receptive to silent screen stars. In their official content, fan magazines promoted strong ideas about what women wanted and what they *should* want from the cinema—they marketed romance to their female readers and scattered their pages with beauty and fashion advertisements. Magazines and exhibitors alike recurrently ran competi-



tions promising viewers the chance to be the “next big thing” or the future “Pictures Girl” through beauty and talent contests. However, not every reader wanted to be on the screen, and despite the excessive focus by the magazine upon physical beauty, readers often criticized stars for enjoying popularity founded on appearance alone.

Pola Negri, for example, whose star image was the embodiment of the exotic “vamp,” frustrated some fans, who demanded that she “stop posing and being a fashion plate” (*Picturegoer*. Oct. 1925: 66), and take on less “artificial roles” (*Picturegoer*. Sept. 1925: 66). American actress Gloria Swanson, who was one of the most glamorous early film stars, often comes under fire from British fans across the 1920s for her poor acting. One fan exclaims of her:

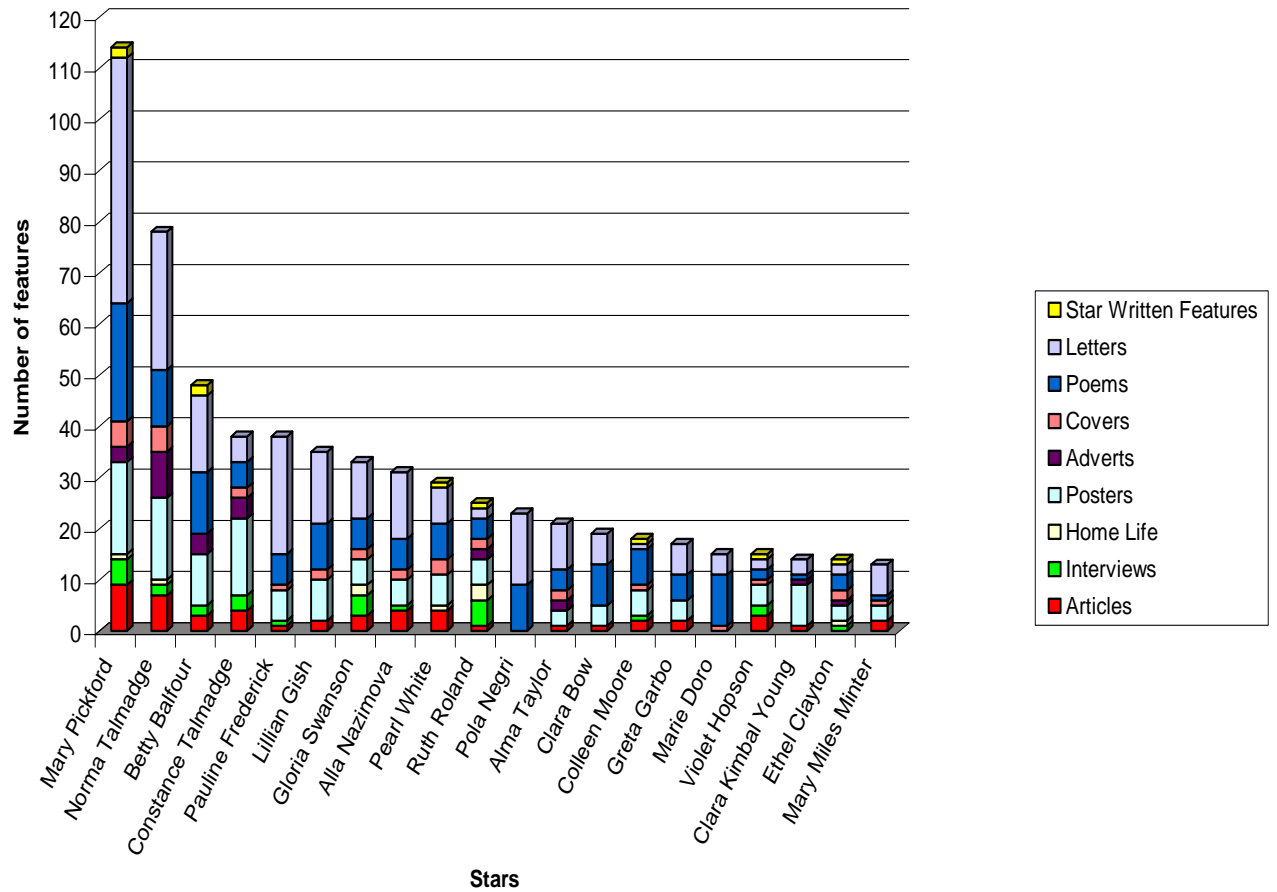
Gloria Swanson: Attractive? Oh yes! But isn't there a somewhat theatrical savour about her acting? She owns a 'bag of tricks,' which she 'lets off' on every occasion. The change is only in her gowns, *she* is the same, always. (*Picturegoer*. Sept. 1925: 66)

Prompted by these examples of resistance to screen stereotypes, I have attempted to approach star representation in a more systematic way in order to see which stars appeared most prominently in British fan culture. My aim is to find different methodological approaches to star images in order to focus on particular star personas drawn not simply from those films which survive the era, but read outwards from the cultural texts with which fans were directly engaging, and from their own assessment of those stars considered most significant.

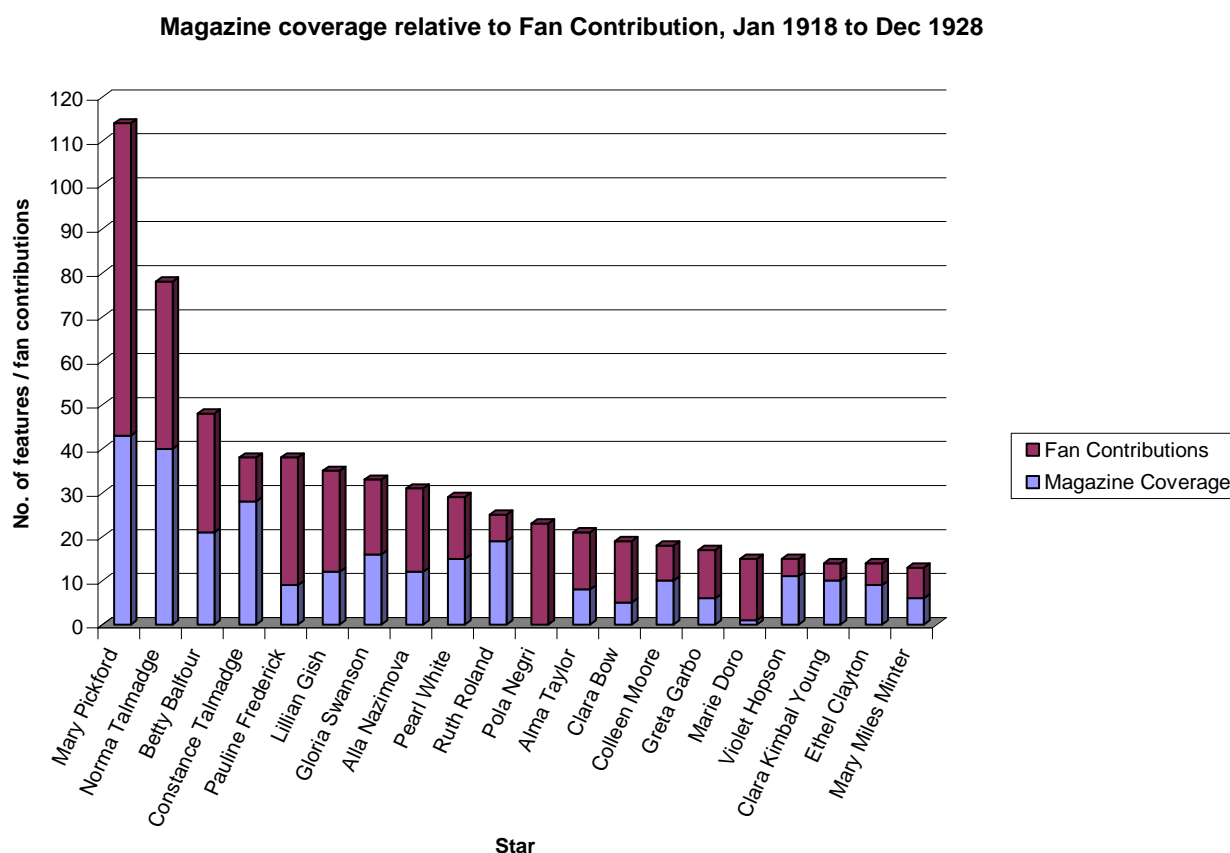
The table and graph below show the most prominently featured female stars from approximately 223 tallied in *Picturegoer* magazine as one of the most popular British fan publications across 1918 to 1928, and reveals the various feminine types circulating in film discourse to which British women specifically were exposed. [1]

Star	Nationality	Articles	Interviews	Home life features	Posters	Adverts	Covers	Poems	Letters	Features written by stars	Totals
Mary Pickford	American	9	5	1	18	3	5	23	48	2	114
Norma Talmadge	American	7	2	1	16	9	5	11	27		78
Betty Balfour	British	3	2		10	4		12	15	2	48
Constance Talmadge	American	4	3		15	4	2	5	5		38
Pauline Frederick	American	1	1		6		1	6	23		38
Lillian Gish	American	2			8		2	9	14		35
Gloria Swanson	American	3	4	2	5		2	6	11		33
Alla Nazimova	Russian	4	1		5		2	6	13		31
Pearl White	American	4		1	6		3	7	7	1	29
Ruth Roland	American	1	5	3	5	2	2	4	2	1	25
Pola Negri	Polish							9	14		23
Alma Taylor	British	1			3	2	2	4	9		21
Clara Bow	American	1			4			8	6		19
Colleen Moore	American	2	1		5		1	7	1	1	18
Greta Garbo	Swedish	2			4			5	6		17
Marie Doro	American						1	10	4		15
Violet Hopson	British	3	2		4		1	2	2	1	15
Clara Kimball Young	American	1			8	1		1	3		14
Ethel Clayton	American		1	1	3	1	2	3	2	1	14
Mary Miles Minter	American	2			3		1	1	6		13

Twenty Highest Featuring Stars in Picturegoer Magazine, Jan 1918 to Dec 1928



Recording how stars featured in this way specifically reveals how certain actresses received next to no formal magazine coverage, yet remained prominent based purely upon fan interest and writing, as shown in the graph below:



Actresses like Pola Negri and Marie Doro, for example, rarely feature in the official pages of *Picturegoer*, and yet remain inside the higher bracket of stars tallied based upon their continued discussion by contributing readers. Understanding the popularity of certain personalities, therefore, cannot be a process simply drawn from those filmic images which appear dominant.

Research in the ephemera archive opens up these kinds of readings, providing a more detailed understanding of how female audiences interpreted dominant personas like that of Mary Pickford, and which particular forms of female stereotyping—vamp, flapper, glamour—were most under discussion and scrutiny. The recording of *Picturegoer* stars shows a dominance of American personalities, but suggests reasons for their popularity beyond the statistical dominance of imported film over domestic production and exhibition. Fan discussion focuses strongly upon acting style and costuming, for example, both on and off the screen, as inescapably tied to both a film and a star's nationality, and for many fans the British star seemed unable to navigate the crucial balance between traditional femininity and the culture of personality and physical glamour that stardom required, failing where American stars like Pickford succeeded.

Of the most regularly featured actresses, few adhere strongly to what fans considered to be a more austere British image, but rather the most popular seem to blend a more modern off-screen image with a moderate on-screen persona. Stars like Mary Pickford, Norma Talmadge and Lillian Gish were praised as “sweet,” “pretty” or “dainty.” The flapper style personified by actresses like Colleen Moore is present among the most popular stars, but is ultimately outweighed by Talmadge and Pickford’s less radical but no less modern image of femininity.

Fans write about the tendency to steer towards conservative fashions in particular in British productions as contrasted with more outlandish and extravagant American styles. British stars were not generally presented as glamorous individuals in their off-screen lives, and the way in which they were domestically marketed often emphasized this as a point of pride, underscoring the importance of actresses like Alma Taylor who refrained from using makeup and had a preference for simple costumes. Many fan letters show frustration with this perceived failure of British stars to mimic the American style.

One woman discussing the faults of British films in general cites a recent example in which the heroine, “was plain to an extent of positive ugliness at times and atrociously dressed and shod” (*Picturegoer*. 11 Mar. 1920: 268). Another insists that if one, “put[s] an American actress beside an English one [...] you can tell at a glance the American, by her clothes and the smart way she had of wearing them” (*Picturegoer*. May. 1928: 54). These letters exemplify how women used fan magazines to discuss female typing found on the screen, and the manner in which they expressed their understanding, appreciation and frustration at the imposition of this typing, so often in conflict with both traditionalist and progressive cultural ideals.

Women, hence, were able to use the fan magazine to challenge the patriarchally controlled, trade-dictated female images that the cinema perpetuated by debating their usefulness and appeal, and placing them within their own personal frame of reference. They recognized the significance of the fan magazine as a potential forum for female expression capable of exerting some influence upon the industry’s construction of female spectatorship. An awareness of women’s primary place within leisure industries and mass consumer culture could therefore be recognized not as an entirely passive position but as one pivotal to the success of the cinema industry. Although there are obvious limitations to women’s self-expression within the fan magazine—such as editorial decisions and choices—the creation of a critical space for self-representation is nevertheless significant for women in a period where imposed cultural dis-

courses governing the place of contemporary femininity weighed so heavily upon the modern female image.

### **Fan Writing in Other Forms**

Fan writing can be found elsewhere in the ephemera archive beyond the confines of the fan magazine. The wealth of cinema postcards held at the Bill Douglas Centre are another example unique to this kind of archive, which offer tantalizing glimpses into the way in which cinema and female stars images infiltrated culture in other interesting forms. Postcards reveal how these images circulated through traditional channels of communication and forms of visual currency tied to everyday slang, cliché and comedy, coupled with snippets of conversation and gossip about fan activity, such as card collecting and following the careers of particular stars.

Postcard humour is a strong indicator of popular ideas about cinema culture, its effects and its audience, which get rapidly taken up in a broad cultural consciousness at particular moments. Examples of silent cinema cards at the Bill Douglas Centre are abundant. A typical example of an illustrated card depicts a forlorn, black-eyed husband cast out of bed in the wake of the aggressive transformation of his serial-loving wife as she pummels the pillows with her fists. The accompanying caption reads, "She's been to see that serial film again—drat it!" The sender, 'Beatrice,' remarks to her correspondent on the reverse: "It looks as though she isn't half giving him some stick—what do you say?" (EXEBD 87572).

The image of the empowered movie-fan and long-suffering husband was a popular postcard illustration. Another example shows a laughing audience at the picture palace watching a film image of a smartly dressed wife ready to depart the family home while her husband scowls, slaving over dirty dishes with the caption, "These Pictures at the 'Movies' started all my troubles" (EXEBD 87505). Other cartoons illustrated star-struck fans and courting couples sneaking cuddles in the darkness of the theatre, with knowing annotations from their female senders. A card sent in 1913 depicting a female cinemagoer looking searchingly across the auditorium with the caption "I saw someone in front last night, was it you?" carries a teasing scribbled message on the reverse reading: "Was this what you was up too last night [sic]. I should rather think it was. From one who knows better" (EXEBD 87514).

Cards featuring star portraits are sent with chatty inscriptions discussing fan collections and particular screen favourites. One lengthy exchange which can be picked out across the Bill Douglas collection is a series of cards sent back and forth between two particular women, 'Bess' and 'Hattie,' in 1928, who send one another star portrait postcards for their collec-

tions and discuss their latest cinema discoveries and viewings (Peter Jewell Collection, EXEBD 84864; 85077; 85057; 85083; 85161; 85165; 85293; 85353; 86450). Some examples of their correspondence follow. On the reverse of a card showing Constance Talmadge: "I have not seen this film star for ages. Have you?" (EXEBD 86450) On an Esther Ralston card: "Many thanks for both your pretty cards. I saw this film star last week for the first time, and I do like her" (EXEBD 85353). Another: "I will try to see the 'talkies' you mention when they come [...] I saw two extra good silent films. Dolly Davies in *Free & Twenty* and Julianne Johnson, Robert Fraser, and Gertrude Astor in *Dame Blanche*. Do see them all" (EXEBD 85077), "I did not go to see *French Without Tears* as I am going this week to see a thriller at the same theatre called *Poison Pen*. It has had a good run in London" (EXEBD 85165), "Sorry dear, but you have sent me one of Louise Brooks [...] glad you liked the films I told you about" (EXEBD 85293).

Other examples from female correspondents, such as the following, prove useful in revealing the different sites from which women gathered memorabilia: "Dear Phyllis. We went to see a Picture with Alma Taylor in the other evening. They were selling these P.C.s of her so thought perhaps you'd like one" (EXEBD 84942). Other card annotations again underscore the fluidity of images as collectables between friends: "Many thanks for your lovely two cards. I do like the one of Evelyn Bernette. I wonder if you could let me have a few more cards dear?" (EXEBD 85325). On the reverse of Mae Marsh postcard, a woman writes: "This is the only one I can find of M.M.—it is not a very nice one!" (EXEBD 84753).

The aforementioned correspondence reveal how ideas and cinema images were used and reworked in individual contexts, as women swapped the cards for collector albums or compiled them for female friends. They also show how cinema slotted into other areas of daily life, mentioned in holiday postcards as part of a series of leisure activities, or as a highlight of a city visit.

Scrapbooks and diaries tell similar stories about individual histories, offering unique insights into the habits and interests of particular women, but also demonstrating how women reworked cinematic images and marketing materials designed to appeal to female tastes in personally meaningful ways. The ephemera archive specifically foregrounds these kinds of objects. The Bill Douglas collection holds numerous scrapbooks created to chart the success of specific female stars, such as the three Talmadge sisters, Norma, Constance and Natalie, to which one fan dedicated a hand bound scrapbook following their intertwining careers (EXEBD 49185). A diary kept in a school exercise book by a fourteen-year-old girl throughout 1922 has numerous entries on cinema-going. Some examples:

*March 2nd*: Mollie & I went to get a little bit of shopping then went on to the Shepherd's Bush Pavilion to see the *Wild Rose*. Usual girl & baby style. Jolly good action, but not much of a plot.

*March 7<sup>th</sup>*: Saw *The Heart of a Rose* at a funny little Cinema. Not at all bad. Got home at 10:35. Molly had been telling me all her troubles and joys.

*March 20<sup>th</sup>*: Got to Waterloo took tube to City [...] Went to Garrick Theatre to see *Bunty Pulls the Strings*. Ripping. Ate ½ the chocs between us.

*April 5<sup>th</sup>*: Miss K, E.E., M & J went to the pictures at Sh's Bush Pavilion. Saw *Rosita*. Seemed to be jolly nice but place was full so we had to go at side of front row. All the people looked far too tall. [2]

Other examples include a notebook listing favourite players alphabetically with ages and other snippets of accumulated personal information, with a detailed handwritten index. Numerous autograph books are held at the centre, collecting star signatures beside their pictures. Fan letters can also be found, unsent yet retained, addressed to actresses such as Greta Garbo. Newspaper clippings were pasted into albums and scrapbooks alongside fan art and annotations, collectable posters and postcards, articles and cigarette cards. A star image or film narrative could be kept in constant flow in this way—reconstructed, swapped, collected and discarded, and reframed with personal notation, situated within personal narratives of everyday life and experiences.

Reflecting upon these key sites of women's writing found within the ephemeral film archive, my aim has been to demonstrate the way in which an archival exploration of audiences opens up a variety of source material, offering a wide spectrum of possible readings and female voices. In searching for examples of the writing of gendered silent cinema spectators, we might strengthen a critical understanding of the 1920s as a productive environment for women's writing in unique spheres, from the personal to the professional.

Cinema culture offered original forms of female community and voice in the decline of previous sites of women's unity, as suffrage activism diminished and a post-war backlash arose against women's increased presence within the work force. Archival examples suggest new forms of female discussion and community within commercial and consumerist discourses. Although far from radical, varied forms of women's writing—from everyday fan to professional critic—offered reinterpretations and subtle challenges to imposed representations received from the cinema. In using resources like the Bill Douglas Centre, we find the articulation of myriad voices unable to be heard in the film text, yet just as valuable in under-



standing how cinema impacted upon women's lives in the early years of the twentieth century. In the process of researching these specific voices, the value of the ephemera archive is underscored.

## Notes

[1] The results reflect a general overview taken from the most detailed compilation of the magazine available, where I have combined research from the original publications held at the BDC with the microfilm collection of *Picturegoer* held at Southampton University's Hartley Library to constitute as complete a collection of issues across the date range as possible.

[2] Uncatalogued found diary from 1922.

## References

Gamman, Lorraine and Margaret Marshment, eds. (1988) *The Female Gaze: Women as Viewers of Popular Culture*. London: The Women's Press.

Hall, Stuart (1981) Notes on Deconstructing 'The Popular,' in Raphael Samuel (ed.), *People's History and Socialist Theory*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, pp. 227-241.

Sanders, Lise Sharipo (2002) Indecent Incentives to Vice: Regulating Films and Audience Behavior from the 1890s to the 1920s, in Andrew Higson (ed.), *Young and Innocent? The Cinema of Britain, 1896-1930*. Exeter: Exeter University Press, pp. 97-110.

Studlar, Gaylyn (1996) The Perils of Pleasure? Fan Magazine Discourse as Women's Commodified Culture in the 1920s, in Richard Abel (ed.), *Silent Film*. London: Athlone Press, pp. 263-297.

Willis, Paul (2002) Symbolic Creativity, in Ben Highmore (ed.), *The Everyday Life Reader*. London: Routledge, pp. 281-2

## **Archival Realities and Contagious Spaces: Shop Girls, Censorship and the City in *Damaged Goods***

*Heida Johannsdottir, University College London*

Researching and writing about silent cinema can be described as a process of investigation and discovery. With the majority of silent-era films lost, and many of those preserved existing only in a fragmentary state, our understanding of the history of early cinema is to a considerable extent dependent on textual sources. Historical documents such as programme notes or catalogue entries frequently constitute the only traces of perished films, while also offering tantalizing clues to a lost “wholeness” when working with incomplete prints. Furthermore, since most silent era prints are only accessible in archives in a range of geographical locations, their discursive “existence” in descriptive passages in scholarly work gains in importance, moving the silent film heritage further into a text-based realm of linguistic mediation. That is to say, because of limitations imposed by problems of access, scholars must, to a certain extent, rely on the work of others and thus make use of the textual mediation of films in their research. It should be noted, however, that the concept “text” does not refer solely to the written word. Illustrations, ephemera, and the films themselves are all systems of signification, and although operating through different media, they all contribute to a web of signification and intertextuality.

So how do we approach interpretation on the textual level when the work of art is so vulnerable, when indeed it is often impossible to establish what chain of causality has contributed to its current physical and visual-narrative shape? How far can one go in analysing a particular film when so many factors are unknown, and so many representative works of a past film culture have disappeared? These are questions which face scholars working with archival material, and in most cases, the analytic process is one of reconstruction based on available sources which in the end leaves us with an object quite different from the traditional notion of a complete “work.” The study of *Damaged Goods*, a British film directed by Alexander Butler (Samuelson Film Company, 1919), which addresses the social and medical problem of venereal disease, highlights many of the issues outlined above. The film is preserved in the BFI national archive in a considerably shorter version than the documented original. It has been reduced from the original feature length of approximately ninety minutes to the rather unusual length of just over forty minutes. However, the existing version of the film, in spite of having more than half of it missing, stands as a coherent, if somewhat uneven, narrative in which not only story causality but also the interplay of metonymic themes remain intact.

In what follows, I will engage with the film in a twofold fashion. Firstly, I will argue that far from being a fragment shaped haphazardly by damage or loss of reels, the state of the film indicates that it was at some point cut down to its current length with the aim of being presentable as a coherent narrative. While it is impossible to ascertain all the factors which might have contributed to the state of the print, extra-textual and historical material relating to the film provides some clues which allow us to suggest that it was shortened to fit into a regulated and specialised exhibition context for public health propaganda. [1] As such, the fragmentary form of the film can be said to bear the marks of the conflicts surrounding the morally controversial topic being addressed. Secondly, I will turn to a close reading of *Damaged Goods* on the textual level, and the manner in which it engages with debates regarding public morality and the regulation of sexuality. A strong didactic tone permeates the narrative, which clearly addresses and attempts to incorporate aspects of the social and moral discourses surrounding venereal disease in the period of the film's release. At the same time, the film draws upon the conventions of narrative cinema and employs metonymic themes, which project anxieties over the delineation of sexual mores and gender roles in modern urban society onto fears of disease. However, a clear delineation between the two areas of inquiry is difficult to maintain because the omissions and modifications which give shape to the current form of the film necessarily affect signification, thus making extra-textual factors, such as the ideological emphasis informing the assumed editorial alterations, highly relevant to any consideration of textual meaning.

*Damaged Goods* belongs to a wider constellation of similarly themed films produced in Britain in the period following the First World War, which addressed venereal disease as a social and medical problem. Most were produced as educational films, often adorned with a lightly fictionalized narrative, and meant to instruct on matters of sexual hygiene, but *Damaged Goods* is particularly notable as it was produced within a commercial context and intended for wide release as a vehicle of both entertainment and public information. [2] Drawing upon the familiar narrative theme of imperilled female innocence and purity, the film traces the transmission of venereal disease from an unfortunate shopgirl-turned-prostitute, to the "respectable" wife of a VD-smitten husband.

While the film attempted to engage in the education and moral instruction of the public by addressing and advising on problems of sexual behaviour and health, scepticism towards cinema as a popular cultural form prevented its wide-ranging commercial distribution. At stake was not so much an attempt to censor the film, as concern over how the "correct" reception of the film's message could be ensured among viewers. A com-

parison to the more established middle-class cultural venue of the theatre is relevant here, as the film was adapted from a French play by Eugène Brieux, which had been successfully staged in the London West End two years earlier. While the play, originally written in 1902, had faced its share of controversy and did not pass the censors in France, Germany, Britain and the USA until the war effort brought an acute awareness of the problem of VD among troops, the British film failed altogether to obtain a censorship certificate, despite speaking to a subject matter considered by various authorities to be of public concern. [3]

Right from its inception in 1917, the film project had been met with suspicion by the British Board of Film Censors (BBFC), and then, when the completed film was presented to the censors in 1919, it was formally rejected. The decision could not be revoked, despite intense efforts by the distributing company to highlight the educational potential of the film. In an attempt to sway the censors, the distributors invited politicians as well as members of public morality groups and the clergy to private press screenings where the film's reform message and potential to reach the general public were discussed (Aldgate and Robertson, 1995: 7-8). Similar strategies had worked well to curb the controversy in relation to the staging of the play, as its reform message was elevated and social reform groups were appealed to for endorsements. [4] In an effort to stave off criticism of the play's potential for exploiting a sex-related topic, the playwright described himself in a newspaper interview as a devoted reformist who endeavoured to use drama as an "instrument for the amelioration of social conditions," fiercely rejecting "[t]he idea of the dramatic exploitation of vice," and disclaiming any wish to portray "vice unless virtue was thereby served" (*New York Times*, 1914: 8). The fact that the film project, despite various attempts, failed to activate or make use of the redemptive and reformist discourses, which had allowed the play to circumvent hostile reactions to its 'inflammatory' themes, can be explained with reference to its institutional context.

The concerns provoked by the stage play regarding "the dramatic exploitation of vice," and concerns over whether the reformist spirit of the work could be ensured at the level of reception, became even more pressing with the introduction of the story into the realm of cinema. Complex factors were at play here. In the teens, the cinema in Britain still inhabited a relatively ambiguous social position, which was being negotiated and defined through the intervention of public morality groups, governmental institutions and the film industry. As Annette Kuhn has pointed out, the censorship ban on *Damaged Goods* can be seen in the context of an effort on the behalf of the BBFC, under increased pressure from morality and reform groups, to forge a stronger distinction between filmmaking for educational and instructional purposes, and commercial cinema as a

realm of “neutral” popular entertainment (Kuhn, 1985: 119-121). *Damaged Goods* was as such categorised with a number of domestic and US-imported feature narrative films which appeared in Britain during and after the war, and dealt specifically with matters of public and sexual morality, many of them addressing the problem of venereal disease from a self-proclaimed educational standpoint. Perplexed by the problematic cases of educational fiction films, the BBFC crafted the category of “propaganda” films, and denied such films a licence a priori (Kuhn, 1989: 67). These films would by policy be refused a certificate by the board, because of their potential of “influencing public opinion, or enlisting sympathy, on certain subjects,” to quote the 1919 BBFC Annual Report, which furthermore recommended that “these films should be exhibited in Halls specially taken for the purpose where securities could be taken for choosing the audience which are impossible in the ordinary cinema” (BBFC, 1919; cited in Low, 1971: 61).

Thus the resistance to the commercial release of *Damaged Goods* offers an interesting illustration of how the regulation of discourses of sexuality could be redirected towards the equally pressing matter of regulating the public sphere of the cinema, which was seen as a powerful cultural venue and a novel technology endowed with phenomenal capacity to “expose” audiences to whatever message was being communicated in a particular instance. Concerns were raised by reform associations such as the National Council for Public Morals over not only the moral influence of films, but also about the cinema as a morally suspect venue. In that spirit the Cinema Commission of Inquiry, set up by the council in 1916 to assess the social, moral and educational influence of cinema, recommended, among other things, more lighting in cinema to prevent immoral acts being initiated in the heterosocial and darkened space of the cinema auditorium (Low, 1950: 134; Field, 1974: 66).

The threat posed by *Damaged Goods* as a film project was therefore grounded in the perceived impact of the medium itself, as well as the efficient distribution network already in place, which would ensure the wide cultural circulation of films among the largely working class audiences, of which women, young people and children formed an enthusiastic majority. Thus, and in spite of its strong social and moral message, *Damaged Goods* was caught up in a process in which the regulation of sexuality and of cinema intersected, relegating the exhibition of the film to a regulated framework of the medico-moral discourses of sexuality. While the film may have been shown commercially in some licence-defiant cinemas, its cinematic afterlife seems to have depended on its incorporation into public health campaigns, carried out by public morality groups such as The National Council for Combating Venereal Disease (NCCVD).

From the early 1920s, film production and film distribution gradually became a prominent part of the NCCVD anti-VD propaganda campaign. According to an article in *The Lancet*, the association had as early as 1921 begun to organise lecture events accompanied by film screenings, “a most valuable addition to the propaganda material,” attracting local attendees by the thousands (*The Lancet*, 1921: 719). The association, which was renamed The British Social Hygiene Council in 1925, was the main agent which produced and distributed official public health propaganda on venereal disease, supported for the task with funding from the Ministry of Health (Boon, 1999: 138). The programmes would feature a lecture by a medical professional, followed by a free screening programme of public health films about venereal disease, and pamphlets would be handed out, ensuring that the reformist point would be “driven home,” and the audiences sent away in the correct mindset (Partington, 1924). The target groups for the educational screenings were initially the working class public in the northern industrial towns, where, in the words of Dr. Mary Scharlieb, a prominent member of the association, cinema could be put to use in appealing “to people who would not listen to religious exhortation, who could not understand a lecture, people who are slow to understand and hard to convince” (ibid: 3). The association had compiled a variety of fiction and non-fiction films which were available for these events, and in the listing of their films, the suitable audience for each film is carefully specified, ranging from “medical students and practitioners,” to “groups of adult men” and “mixed adult audiences” (N.C.C.V.D, 1924). [5] While many of the fictional films managed by the NCCVD were produced or sponsored by the association, they had also procured rights to some commercially produced films. Among them was *Damaged Goods*, listed as commercially owned, although stating that special showings could be made through the National Council (ibid: 3). [6]

The format of the events provides some indication of how the existing copy of *Damaged Goods* might have ended up in its current half-length version. The weekday evening programmes for working-class audiences would, according to advertisements in Halifax, Manchester and Blackpool in 1923, feature a number of screenings in addition to a lecture of three quarters of an hour (Partington, 1924). Thus, the advertisement for a series of lecture-film nights in Blackpool lists seven “of the World’s Greatest” VD films as being on the programme, including *Whatsoever a Man Soweth*, *Venereal Diseases*, *Memories*, and *Damaged Goods*, and although it is difficult to ascertain the precise content or line-up of an evening’s performance (particularly given the separate programmes for men and women), the repeated emphasis in the advertisements on a broad selection of films, combining features and shorts, indicates that variety was in itself viewed as an attraction (ibid: 12). In Manchester, for example, two feature length films, *Damaged Goods* and *The End of the Road*, were

advertised together, with two additional shorts also being named as part of the programme, suggesting that diversity was indeed seen as a means to bolster attendance (ibid: 11). In that case, and in light of the lecture that preceded the film screenings, it is fair to wonder how such a programme, starting as late as eight in the evening, could proceed without either keeping workers out past midnight, or, conversely, feature shortened versions of some of the longer films. It thus seems very likely that shorter versions of the feature length films were being used, in some cases, to allow for a more varied selection of screenings and to keep the programmes within reasonable length for audiences who had a long working day ahead of and behind them.

Through these channels, fictional films previously refused by the censors, such as *Damaged Goods*, and the US-imported *The End of the Road*, were shown under moral supervision to carefully specified groups of audiences. Administering the project were educated middle class reformers who some years before had not only turned their scrutinising attention to the potentially disrupting social effects of cinema, but also were active in promoting the educational and morally uplifting possibilities of the medium. From the above it can be suggested that the moral as well as institutional environment surrounding both cinema and public health in the immediate post-war years contributed to the modified shape in which we find *Damaged Goods* today. Whether supervised by the producers or distributors of the film, or other parties, the film was most likely drastically shortened to meet the criteria of the regulated exhibition context into which it was incorporated. As such, *Damaged Goods* can be viewed as a form of a reconstructed and appropriated text, which adds a layer of consideration to the project of exploring the film's socio-moral discourse on the textual level. And it is during the process of explicating the film's discursive frame of reference that it becomes clear, as I will argue in the following section, that the re-editing of the film was accomplished not only with narrative coherence in mind, but also with considerable sensitivity to metaphorical and textual associations at play in the film.

### Metaphors of Contagion

Having charted the responses that the film provoked and traced its course through the regulated discourse of sexuality and cinema, we now turn our attention to the manner in which the film, through its employment of metaphors of contagion and disease as a social threat, negotiates social constructions of gender and the mapping of city space. Here a brief contextualisation of the social and political ramifications of the VD debate is in order. The public and medical discourses on the problems of venereal disease around the turn of the century, and in the first decades of the twentieth century, can be linked to debates surrounding the reassessment



of the social organisation and construction of gender roles. Widespread concerns about the decline of the nation in both quantity and quality had been prevalent in the years preceding the war, which fuelled eugenic ideologies and a renewed emphasis on the family as the fundamental building block of the nation. These ideas were most forcefully expressed among middle class reform groups, which had formed a discursive alliance with medical professionals (Bland and Mort, 1984: 137). The war experience brought about the greatly increased participation of women in the public sphere and the workplace. It also brought to the surface a number of underlying public health anxieties (Hall, 2000: 82-87). At the centre of these concerns was a moral panic regarding sexually transmitted diseases, syphilis in particular with its devastating hereditary effects on children, and as such the disease was perceived not only as a threat to individual health, but also national health and the future of the "race" (May, 1924: 10-11). The spread of the venereal diseases became an important focus of debates and concerns with the state of the nation, and perceptions of the sexual mores and health of the "social body."

*Damaged Goods* clearly engages with the medico-moral discourses on social hygiene and venereal disease, which were prevalent in the period. Standard public health information is conveyed through the character of the doctor, who is the main agent through which viewers are enlightened regarding matters of transmission and treatment of VD. As Annette Kuhn has pointed out, *Damaged Goods* shares elements with a genre of social problem films common in the years around the war, in that the film narrativises the acquisition of knowledge through its characters, thus ultimately addressing spectators as "moral subjects" (Kuhn, 1988: 51-55).

The story of the film demonstrates the risks of irresponsible sexual behaviour and the dire consequences which lie in wait if venereal disease, once contracted, is not properly treated. These "lessons" are woven into the stories of two sets of characters from different levels of society, whose fates are loosely intertwined. On the one hand, the film chronicles the misfortunes of Edith Wray, introduced by the intertitles as an orphan "fresh from the country," who has just arrived in the "great metropolis" in order to seek her fortune. Edith gets a job as a sales assistant in a dress shop, but is sexually exploited by the proprietor who later fires her when her pregnancy is revealed. With no one willing to hire her, Edith is forced to turn to prostitution. She places her child in the care of a convent, and disappears from the narrative, only to re-emerge towards the end of the film as a toughened prostitute and patient of the VD specialist. Here, we learn that Edith has become one of the carriers of syphilis in an underworld into which young men from the upper levels of society tend to stray, and transmit the disease to their respectable wives and innocent children.



Demonstrating that process, the other strand of the narrative follows the story of a young couple of higher social status, the law student George Dupont and his fiancée Henrietta. In the beginning of the film, George is about to finish his law studies and becomes engaged to his cousin Henrietta, the daughter of an M.P. During a night of celebration with his friends at a dance hall, George becomes drunk – and, it is implied, exposes himself to VD. George consults the VD specialist who urges him not to marry until he has undergone a full three-year treatment. George, however, disregards the doctor's advice and resorts to a faux medicine sold to him by a quack. George marries his unsuspecting fiancée, but when their sickly child is diagnosed with the disease it becomes clear that George has inflicted his wife with syphilis. The family is at breaking point when the doctor intervenes and offers his advice to Henrietta's father, and persuades him to look rationally at the situation. At a meeting between the two in the doctor's consulting room, the doctor argues that the patients are not to be blamed for their disease, and that the government should do more to inform the public about how to avoid VD, or if unlucky enough to contract it, seek and follow professional medical treatment. The doctor brings in one of his VD patients to emphasise his point to the M.P., and the patient turns out to be Edith. After having Edith tell the M.P. her sad story, the doctor defines Edith as the root of the problem of VD, emphasising to the M.P. the social nature of the problem which must be responded to: "This poor girl is typical. The whole problem is summed up in her."

With the "public woman" safely placed under the regulative control of the medical and governmental authorities, the life of the middle class couple can now return to normal. Henrietta is subsequently advised to forgive her husband, who after proper treatment will be as good as new. The final scene of the film takes place in the M.P.'s home, where Henrietta forgives and the family is reunited under the approving gaze of the M.P. and the good doctor who reminds those present of the sanctity of marriage by quoting the scripture "Whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."

As the film gradually focuses on the fate of the Dupont family, relegating Edith and her misfortunes to the background, its firm allegiance to middle-class reformist ideology becomes apparent. The resolution of the "social problem" articulated through the VD threat culminates in the protection of the institution of marriage and the restoration of the reproductive health of the married couple. The endangerment of the future and vigour of the race manifests itself in the spread of the disease to George and Henrietta's son who is dramatically introduced as: "Their child – a weakling." In the resolution of the problem, the domestic sphere is purged of contamination, and the threat to the unity of the family and future of the

race is diverted. Similarly, it can be said that the destabilised border between the domestic sphere of respectability and female purity, and the public sphere of dangerous sexualities, is re-established. In the very different resolution of Edith's story, in which no moral redemption seems to be on offer, only medical treatment, she, in all her "publicness" becomes an emblem of the contagion of the public sphere which has symbolically been contained.

Along with its attempt to navigate a controversial moral terrain by keeping faith with a reformist message, the potentials of the *Damaged Goods* as fictional entertainment are exploited through the employment of established cinematic codes of melodrama. It is on this level that the film engages more clearly with anxieties evoked by the social transformations of modern urban society and in which the disease at the centre of the story can be read in a metaphorical context. By juxtaposing the effects of the disease on the domestic and family life of the middle-class couple, and the shop worker/streetwalker, a woman who seeks agency in the public sphere, the film maps out the gendered social field of private and public spheres, and employs metaphors of contagion to dramatise the instabilities and threats posed to the demarcations of the established social system.

The film's suggestion that the public sphere is a threat to the purity of the domestic sphere is most clearly articulated through the representation of spaces emblematic of the modern metropolis. The locus of danger is not only found in the sordid underbelly of the city's nightlife and prostitution, but also and more importantly, in the dress shop. The connotations of the shop suggest that this is a place of corruption and seduction, and Edith's downfall seems imminent from the moment she enters its consumerist domain. The interior of the dress showroom is filled with extravagant materials; oriental carpets, plush furniture and seductive clothing, and models walk among the male and female customers displaying the commodities. The male customers are shown to be aroused by the display of female bodies, and some attempt to make contact with the shop girls, while their distracted female companions are seduced by the consumer goods. The owner seems to view his shop as a harem rather than a business establishment, and enjoys the spectacle at his store, and sexually harasses one shop assistant after another. Thus the dress store as a workplace and a site of consumption is presented as a seductive and morally corruptive space, and perhaps contagious in itself. On a metonymic level the representation of sexual behaviour and desire, which cannot be addressed directly in the film, is substituted by symbolism, which plays on associations between sexual seduction and consumer desire. [7] In this context, modern urban society is articulated as a space of commodification and corruption of the female body. The notion of publicness is articulated in terms of

exposure, and, as such, female agency and mobility in the public sphere is presented as a predisposition to corruption/contagion.

While the characters of the Dupont family and the doctor are drawn directly from the original play, the narrative focus is altered considerably in the film adaptation by the foregrounding of the character of Edith, the fallen shop girl, and the dangers that befall her as she attempts to establish a life in the city as a single, self-supporting shop worker. This narrative structure is somewhat unusual, as the choice to begin the film with a highly sympathetic account of Edith's story, before moving on to the central characters of the drama, leads the viewer to assume, at first, that Edith is the main character of the film and her predicament might receive a solution in the end. However, when she appears in the doctor's office towards the end of the film, her disease is being treated but her social situation remains the same, and its irreversibility is unchallenged. Rather, Edith's story can be seen to function on the narrative level as the mapping of oppositional social spaces of sexuality and gender, ultimately juxtaposing the trajectories of Edith as a "public woman" and Henrietta as a "domestic woman." The latter, in contrast to Edith, is introduced from the very beginning as the embodiment of Victorian ideals of female purity and asexuality, signified by her white dress, braided hair, childish manner and consistent location within the home. In contrast Edith, by reason of her mobility outside in the public sphere and association with spaces of consumption, inevitably becomes exposed to the dangers/contagion. The moral outrage and main tragedy of the story are to be found in the fact that the protective walls of the domestic sphere are infiltrated by the disease/threat, carried from the public woman to the domestic woman/mother by the public man by fault of his irresponsibility and lack of knowledge of the proper methods of "hygiene."

The film adaptation goes further than the stage play in forging a clear border between the "public" and the "domestic," and representing the former as a space of moral and physical danger for women. In the film, as in the play, the medical discourse on venereal disease stands in for a discourse on the regulation of sexual behaviour: Women should not only abstain from sex outside of marriage, but also keep clear of the public sphere. Even Henrietta's brief venture beyond the domestic sphere, when she visits the dress shop to pick out her wedding dress, proves to be dangerous and morally upsetting. Whilst there she witnesses the upheaval, which occurs when Edith is thrown out of the store after the proprietor's wife discovers her pregnancy. Henrietta, an intertitle explains, thus becomes an "eye witness of Edith's disgrace," in spite of her guardian's attempt to cover her eyes and ears, and thus shield her from the sight of the harsh reality of public life. It is from this contaminated space of consumer desire and moral endangerment that she obtains her wedding

dress, a garment which becomes symbolic of the damaged goods which the marriage contract will bring her. The dress store as a workplace is presented as inherently seductive and contagious, and here the film employs the figure of the shopgirl and the commercialised urban environment to articulate public space as highly suspect.

The close reading of the basic parameters of the film's social commentary and socio-moral discourse inevitably brings us back to the question/problem of the incomplete state of the existing copy of the film. Thanks to the preservation of an illustrated synopsis in a promotional booklet prepared by the company which held the distribution rights to *Damaged Goods*, we are able roughly to assess which scenes and parts are missing or have been omitted in the current version (W. and F. Film Service, 1919).

The alterations indicate that they were not only made to fit formal but also moral criteria of the public health propaganda screening programmes. In the spirit of the domestic ideals promoted by the social hygiene movement, a section of the film described in the synopsis which shows Henrietta reject the false premises of her marriage is missing from the current version. Henrietta's response when she learns of her husband's deceit is, according to the synopsis, a forceful expression of contempt, "she shrinks from him [George] with abhorrence and loathing: 'Don't touch me! Don't touch me!!,'" after which she immediately leaves her husband, taking their child with her, and seeks her father's help in filing for divorce (ibid: 12). The M.P.'s response to the bad news is even more violent as, according to a *Bioscope* review, he "seizes his revolver and threatens to shoot his son-in-law" (Bioscope, 1919: 61). The violent irrationality of the otherwise respectable authority figure, and the threat to the institution of marriage posed by Henrietta seeking divorce, are equally controversial elements, which might have prompted a deliberate omission of those sections from the film.

The most conspicuous absence in the cut version is that of a crucial scene that shows the meeting between the engaged-to-be married George and Edith, the wretched fallen shop girl. Completely missing is the latter part of the nightclub scene, which, in the current version, ends with a shot of George sitting idly and staring into his champagne glass at the table, while his friends avidly follow the commotion and goings-on in the club. According to the synopsis, however, George is introduced to Edith and her prostitute friend a moment later: "Sitting bored and miserable, thoroughly out of tune with his surroundings, he [George] is at last persuaded to join in the revelry, and is introduced to Edith and her friend against his better judgement – in the words of his friend, 'Just for a lark!'" (ibid: 8). In the cut version of the film, the unspeakable act of George's sexual transgres-

sion with the prostitute is indicated with a symbolic scene, which clearly references the film's broader context of signification. Cut the moment before Edith comes to the table at the nightclub, the scene ends with a portentous intertitle simply stating "The Sins of the Fathers," indicating that George's evening ends in a casual sexual liaison. In the following scene, the transgressive nature of George's encounter is signified with a single static shot of Piccadilly Circus by night. This substitution, possibly edited into the film, or at least singled out from a longer section, underlines the thematic articulation of the notion of public space as dangerous and contagious. The symbolic articulation of George's transgression into the forbidden zone of prostitution through an icon of the London West End nightlife, furthermore, creates an association between a notion of the "publicness" of the metropolis and dangerous sexualities. The stillness of the image, of a city location which is by day bustling with life and movement, but comes in this context to signify the underbelly of the London nightlife, arrests the viewer's attention, as the image is frozen, not even transmitting what would in a moving image convey the flickering of the city lights. Whether the act of the censors or a re-edited part of the original version, the scene underscores the symbolic articulation of spaces throughout the film. Not only are the scenes that are missing the most controversial, but the gaps in the narrative are adjusted to the textual associations which are in place in the film in a broader context. One might even say that the shorter version relies more heavily on the metonymic substitution of urbanity, "publicness" and consumerism with the sexual desire and transgressions that are at the centre of the VD issue.

In the context of archival film research, the above discussion of *Damaged Goods* demonstrates the complexity of each case study, which in its combination of filmic and textual clues will bring different sets of problems and reconstructional tasks. In the case of *Damaged Goods*, the intersection of a social discourse with the narrative conventions and institutional contexts of cinema produces a field of meaning which allows us to explore how the morality debate of the time was closely intertwined with questions of class, the family and gender roles, particularly in terms of the manner in which exposure to the public sphere is presented as a metaphor for the risk of contagion and disease. In this case, the study of the film itself, as well as its reception, circulation and censorship history become revealing elements which, thanks to the preservation efforts of moving image archives, enables us to bring to light moments of a fragmented and rapidly disappearing film history.

## Notes

[1] I am indebted to Bryony Dixon, curator at the BFI National Archive, for her consultation on the possible contributing factors to the state of the

print of *Damaged Goods* held by the archive. According to BFI records, the original version of the film was 6500 feet, while the existing version is listed as 3686 feet.

[2] This group of VD films, made in the period 1917-1930, is the subject of a chapter in my dissertation on women, work and city space in British silent cinema.

[3] The war years had also generated an American film adaptation of *Damaged Goods* in 1915, directed by Thomas Ricketts, which also failed to get distribution in the UK.

[4] The first production of the play in independent theatres in London was for instance organised under the auspices of the social reform group Society for Race Betterment (*The Times*, 1914: 9).

[5] The booklet, held by the British Library, does not include a publication date. The date is, however, listed as 1924 in the British Library catalogue.

[6] The film is catalogued as comprising of 6 reels, and the running length 1½ hour, thus referring to a complete version of the film, held by the distributors (ibid: 3).

[7] Lise Shapiro Sanders (2006: 192) discusses *Damaged Goods* in her study of representations of the London shopgirl in the turn of the century popular culture where she points out the connections made in the film between the consumptive space of the metropolis and sexual pleasure/danger.

## References

Aldgate, Anthony and James C. Robertson (2005) *Censorship in Theatre and Cinema*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Anon (1924) *A List of Cinematograph films owned by the N.C.C.V.D.* London: The National Council for Combating Venereal Disease.

Anon (1919) *Damaged Goods*, *Bioscope*, 25 December, p. 61.

Anon (1914) Eugene Brioux Talks Of The Drama's Function; Author of "Damaged Goods" Declares That the Dramatic Exploitation of Vice Is Revolting ; - Thanks the Sane Judgment of Americans for Appreciation of His Work, *The New York Times Sunday Magazine*, 15 November, p. 8.



Anon (1914) M. Brieux's Play at the Little Theatre, *The Times*, 17 February, p. 9.

Bland, Lucy and Frank Mort (1984) Look Out for the 'Good Time' Girl: Dangerous Sexualities as a Threat to National Health, in Tony Bennett, et.als. (eds.), *Formations of Nation and People*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Boon, Timothy Martyn (1999) *Films and the Contestation of Public Health in Interwar Britain*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of London.

British Board of Film Censors (1919) *Annual Report*. London: British Board of Film Censors.

Crew, Tom (1935) *Health Propaganda: Ways and Means*. Leicester & London: Lemuel Bell & Co.

Dunham, Harold and David W. Samuelson (2005) *Bertie: The Life and Times of G.B. Samuelson*. Unpublished manuscript donated to the BFI Library in 2006.

Field, Audrey (1974) *Picture Palace. A Social History of Cinema*. London: Gentry Books.

Grant, E.O. (1921) A Very Energetic Propaganda, *The Lancet*, 2 April, p. 719.

Hall, Lesley A. (2000) *Sex Gender and Social Change in Britain since 1880*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Kuhn, Annette (1985) *The Power of the Image: Essays of Representation and Sexuality*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Kuhn, Annette (1989) *Cinema, Censorship and Sexuality 1909-1925*. London: Routledge.

Low, Rachael (1950) *The History of the British Film 1914-1918*. London: Allen & Unwin.

Low, Rachael (1971) *The History of the British Film 1918-1929*. London: Allen & Unwin.

May, Otto (1924) *Venereal Diseases and their Effects (Based on the Report of the Royal Commission)*. London: The National Council for Combating Venereal Disease, 5<sup>th</sup> edition.

Partington, Tomas Bowen (1924) *A New Force in Public Health Propaganda. Fighting Venereal Disease With the Film*. London: National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases.

Shapiro Sanders, Lise (2006) *Consuming Fantasies: Labor, Leisure, and the London Shopgirl, 1880-1920*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

W. and F. Film Service (1919) *Illustrated Synopsis of Damaged Goods*, written by Eileen Mott. London: W. and F. Film Service. The booklet, which is owned by the Samuelson family archive, is reproduced in Dunham, Harold and David W. Samuelson (2005) *Bertie: The Life and Times of G.B. Samuelson*. Unpublished manuscript donated to the BFI Library in 2006.

## **Filmography**

*Damaged Goods*, 1919. Dir. Alexander Butler. Samuelson Film Manufacturing Company.

*Damaged Goods*, 1915. Dir. Thomas Ricketts. American Film Manufacturing Company.



**Part III:**  
**The Televisual and Digital  
Archive**

## **Reading Political Comedy: *Yes, Minister* and Discursive Contexts**

*Matt Crowder, Royal Holloway, University of London*

The first episode of *Yes Minister* was broadcast on BBC2 25 February 1980 at 9:00 pm. The show's political content was something of a novelty for a sitcom, and it quickly found success with audiences and critics. *Yes Minister* featured three lead roles: Paul Eddington was the eponymous minister, the Rt. Hon Jim Hacker MP; Nigel Hawthorne played his Permanent Secretary, Sir Humphrey Appleby; and Derek Fowlds took the supporting role of the Minister's Principal Private Secretary, Bernard Wooley. The series is easily identified as a traditional sitcom. Neale and Krutnik describe the form as "a short narrative-series comedy, generally between twenty-four and thirty minutes long, with regular characters and setting" (Neale and Krutnik, 1990: 233). The situation, set out in the first episode, "Open Government," sees Jim Hacker appointed Minister for Administrative Affairs. The series repeatedly shows him attempting to perform his governmental duties and devising policies that will benefit the Government and his career. Much of the comedy is centred on the fact that Hacker's initiatives are doomed to certain failure due to the machinations of Sir Humphrey, whose role is to curb Hacker's enthusiasm and maintain the status quo within the department. Each episode has a well-constructed plot, comparable to comedy of manners; [1] Hacker often disagrees with Sir Humphrey's policies and embarks upon his own but is compelled to comply with Sir Humphrey thanks to a variety of manipulations. Hacker's character is eminently likeable and sympathetic but tends towards vanity and foolishness; much comedy is created by the audience's knowledge that he will change his mind due to Sir Humphrey's intellect, rhetoric and civil service connections. Much of the comedy related to Sir Humphrey is based upon his attempts to confuse Hacker with long verbose speeches that emphasise the character's upper class education, his own supreme self-confidence whilst with other civil servants and, occasionally, his panicked attempts to rescue himself from disaster. The narratives generally set Hacker and Sir Humphrey against each other and the unfortunate Bernard is left attempting to please both of his superiors. Sometimes Hacker gets the better of Sir Humphrey and sometimes Sir Humphrey and Hacker find themselves working together for their common good but the situation itself remains stable.

### ***Yes Minister*: The Reception**

*Yes Minister* has significant status as a classic sitcom but has been little discussed within television studies with only two significant pieces of work

(Adams, 1993; and Oakley, 1982). Neither of these deal with viewers' responses; Adams (1993) performs a formal analysis of a single episode of *Yes Prime Minister* to investigate the way the series relates to television genre, looking at the ways in which the "apparently authentic representations of the real world are largely colonised by and animated by the dynamics of comic drama and the conventions of television sitcom [...] within the spectrum of social realism" (1993: 79). He concludes with a generic definition based on this textual analysis, stating that *Yes Minister's* silence regarding political affiliation "precisely locates the series in the realm of comedy [...] rather than of social realism" (1993: 79). Oakley (1982) conducts a political evaluation of the series, taking issue with the trend to valorise popular culture solely on the basis of its popularity. He explores the "deeply conservative features" of the discourses referenced by *Yes Minister*, arguing that its representation of politics as "implicitly pointless and doomed to failure" (1982: 67) belongs to the Tory right and that "the Thatcherite view that spending cuts, especially those reducing 'bureaucrats,' are desirable is barely challenged" (1982: 72). In common with much scholarship on television comedy, neither gives detailed attention to the ways in which *Yes Minister* has been discussed by the viewers for whom it was made and to whom it was broadcast.

The following study is based upon a variety of extra-textual sources that relate to the reception of *Yes Minister*. Unlike the majority of work on television audiences, where primary evidence is gathered from contemporaneous viewers (for example, Ang, 1985; Morley, 1992; Bobo, 1995; and Hallam, 2005), the sources used in this study were all obtained via "unobtrusive methods" (Berg, 2008: 268): archives, libraries and other locations where the source precedes the research (see Cripps, 2003; and Bodroghkozy, 2003 for more of this work in television comedy). The sources used here include British newspaper articles from the *Times*, *Guardian*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Radio Times* and dating from between 1980 to the present day; audience research commissioned by the BBC in 1980; and internet reviews from Amazon.co.uk and Imdb.com from 1999 to 2008. Following the collection of the sources and initial analysis I conducted a content analysis, identifying "patterns, themes, biases and meanings" (Berg, 2008: 338) in the sources' discussions of *Yes Minister*.

Ang's (1985) work on *Dallas* provides a useful model of how to analyse television reception. She begins by looking at "how these letters experience *Dallas*, what it means when they say they experience pleasure or displeasure, how they relate to the way in which *Dallas* is presented to the public" (1985: 11). Ang is modest about the conclusions that the study allows her to reach: "these letters cannot be regarded as representative of the way in which *Dallas* is received in general" (1985: 10). She focuses her study on a qualitative content analysis of her forty-two letters, arguing that "only a few of the ways [of enjoying *Dallas*] will be

dealt with here" (1985: 11). This study similarly relies on a limited number of sources. However, the audience research reports and newspaper articles allow the scope of these conclusions to be extended somewhat; these sources are not the product of one individual and exist in a close relationship to the demands of their respective institutional environments. The audience reports are intended to represent a "typical" audience reaction and used sample groups of a size that was considered indicative of wider trends. Newspaper articles are intended to provide information in a way that is interesting and appealing to their readers; they present discourses that it is assumed will be popular. In their different ways both sources can be treated as indicative of more than one individual's viewing experience and while no statistical representative-ness of sources can be demonstrated, it can be argued that they represent some of the significant ways in which *Yes Minister* has been enjoyed.

### **The Viewer's Pleasures: Comedy, Quality and Authenticity**

The BBC's Audience Research Reports allow access to the BBC's own evaluation documents. The report for the second episode, "The Official Visit," records that the BBC2 broadcast was watched by 2.9 million people. The reaction was largely positive, with 64 per cent of respondents rating the episode "A" or "A+." Viewers enjoyed *Yes Minister* and found it funny. The script and the acting are given considerable praise: "They considered the script had been cleverly and astutely written with its 'delightful subtleties' and 'witty dialogue'" and, "in fact, the whole cast was applauded for the fine efforts" (BBC WAC R9/7/164). It was also described as a "refreshing change" (BBC WAC). The terms used by the BBC's sample viewers—"witty," "delightful" and "refreshing"—demonstrate a clearly pleasurable engagement with the comedy. Most viewers who comment on the internet also describe finding *Yes Minister* funny, though many viewers use terms communicating a lower comic potency, avoiding terms such as "hilarious." The words used frame the comedy experience in a specific way; using terms like "wit," "subtle," "clever" and "intelligent" suggests that the comic pleasures are accompanied by an intellectual appreciation. This suggests that many regarded *Yes Minister* as a quality production (a judgement supported by its many awards) that used a style of humour worthy of intelligent and original television.

Another positive reaction to *Yes Minister* is visible in the research reports. In both the report of the second episode and in the series' summary the series is described as a realistic representation of politics. "Many viewers" (BBC WAC) felt the "characterisations [...] to be adroit reconstructions of politicians and civil servants" (BBC WAC) and one viewer felt the set of the Minister's Office was "exactly how I imagined it would be" (BBC WAC). The interpretation of *Yes Minister* as "accurate" is indicative of the "discourse of authenticity" that is a dominant element in the reception of *Yes*

*Minister*. The BBC report summarising the entire first season contained a selection of quotes that included “I believed every word of it” (BBC WAC) and correspondents were reported finding the series “true to life” (BBC WAC) and “so well done that I am convinced it really happens as you portray it” (BBC WAC). These sentiments show that viewers in 1980 responded to the series as if they thought it was an authentic representation. *Yes Minister* was not seen as simply funny and of a high quality; it was also felt to be “real.” The terms used evoke certainty and belief in the truth and accuracy of the series’ representation of British political culture. Because viewers delivered this judgement in the context of positive evaluation, it also suggests that the series’ authenticity was one of its pleasures. One cannot presume that this is necessarily what individuals actually believed or would re-assert if pressed but it is undeniably one of the dominant terms in which enjoying *Yes Minister* was discussed.

More than 25 years later, comments gathered from the websites Amazon.co.uk and Imdb.com demonstrate a remarkable continuity in the terms of its discussion. An internet reviewer claims that “The series has been cited by political scientists for their accurate and sophisticated portrayal of the relationships between civil servants and politicians – I guess that says it all really” (Amazon, 2008). Another asserts, “I work for a public sector organisation and there are many similarities in the way business is done” (Amazon, 2008) and “Watching each episode was also an education in politics” (IMDB, 2008). Amazon.co.uk had sixteen comments on a page for a *Yes Minister* DVD boxed set; nine of them approvingly reference the discourse of authenticity. IMDB has 22 comments on its entry for *Yes Minister* and eleven of them refer to the series as authentic. The discourse of authenticity was even given the Corporation’s stamp of approval during the BBC’s “Britain’s Best Sitcom” event of 2004. A promotional web page about *Yes Minister* included seven comments from fans, and five of the seven comments on the promotional site refer to the show as relevant or real, one claiming:

It tells the truth about the fundamental dishonesty of politicians and the “Establishment.” And it is very very funny! (BBC, 2008)

The consistent reception of *Yes Minister* as “funny,” “a quality classic” and authentic over a period of 29 years and by a wide of variety of people demonstrates a continuity of reception that deserves attention.

### **The Press Reception**

The dominance of the discourse of authenticity can be demonstrated by the fact that it was also a significant part of the newspaper reception of *Yes Minister*. These articles often assert the series’ authenticity with reference to a set of supposed sources; they claim the script was based

upon political memoirs, given additional material from anonymous Whitehall informants and that the show found near-universal success within political circles. Close attention to these press sources shows that authenticity was one of the BBC's intended interpretations. As already noted, the first episode of *Yes Minister* was broadcast on 25 February 1980, but the discourse of authenticity can first be seen in articles published *before* this date. The pre-broadcast "reception" amounts to thirteen articles found in the *Times*, *Guardian*, *Daily Telegraphy*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail*, *Radio Times*, *Evening Standard* and *Evening News*. Six of these are full articles, and seven are shorter references in TV listings. All thirteen were printed on or before Monday 25 February and, as several journalists complained (Fiddick 1980 and Horner 1980), no-one was given a preview of the programme.

On 18 February 1980, a *Times* article stated that a personal account of Whitehall life by former minister Richard Crossman was a major source for the series' writers, Jay and Lynn (Gosling, 1980). It also referred to Anthony Jay's experiences of working with politicians as a BBC Current Affairs producer. The *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express* repeated that Crossman was the inspiration the next week (Jackson, 1980b; and Murray, 1980). The *Times* article notes that *Yes Minister* was written with "care and research [...] making the themes and relationships as accurate as possible" (Gosling 1980) and the *Daily Express* claims that "[certain politicians] have 'revealed all' to comedy writers Jonathan Lynn and Antony Jay" (Murray, 1980). Before anyone had even seen the opening titles, the BBC were deliberately prompting journalists to produce a set of discourses about the series that would become a dominant part of its reception. One can perhaps even see the hand of the public relations department in the repeated phraseology, "the intricate relationship between minister and permanent secretary" (Gosling, 1980), "the delicate relationship between Government and Civil Service" (Jackson, 1980) and "the theme of a new minister's relationship with his civil servants" (Sinclair, 1980).

However, far from being a baseless PR initiative, the discourse of authenticity was sustained throughout the popular press' reception of *Yes Minister*. An *Evening Standard* article on 26 February used the headline "Sharing Whitehall secrets" (Grundy, 1980) and such articles continued over the next years; at the launch of the second series in 1981 the *Radio Times* claimed that "Labour Cabinet Ministers have been heard to describe it as fantastically true to life" (White, 1981); and in 1986 the *Guardian's* Arts pages described how Paul Eddington's appearance at a press conference for *Yes Prime Minister* was attended by political commentators and war correspondents (Banks-Smith 1986). I gathered 69 newspaper references to *Yes Minister* or *Yes Prime Minister*, dating from between February 1980 and December 1987. They varied from a *Radio Times* cover story to descriptions in television listings. From these 69 articles, 28 directly

refer to the programme's authentic representation of politics with approval, demonstrating the consistently coherent reception of *Yes Minister* and the durability of its discourse of authenticity. Articulating that the programme was somehow "real" was not limited to a few unrepresentative viewers in the BBC's sample audience or internet writers, but came from newspaper journalists and editors too.

### The Comic Paradox

It is not the intention of this work to discuss the press' involvement in the maintenance of the discourse of authenticity or its potential to affect audiences, although it is unlikely that print journalism could have enforced a reception that was counter to the characteristics of the text itself. Instead, attention will be given to how viewers, including journalists, wrote about *Yes Minister* in terms that suggest it was able to communicate genuine political truths while simultaneously providing comic entertainment. Fitting into its generic categorisation as a sitcom, the series was written to generate laughter and according to audience reception sources the performances, plots and dialogue succeeded in this admirably. However, it is also clear that another way in which *Yes Minister* has been defined by viewers is as an authentic representation of politics. As Adams (1993) and viewers commented, it is a programme that "looks real;" its setting, dialogue and plots are viewed as possessing a sense of verisimilitude. Therefore, the combination of praise for *Yes Minister* as both funny *and* authentic has its foundation in a clear set of textual characteristics. However, there is an element of paradox in finding a programme both funny and saying "I believe every word of it;" claims of authenticity, and the associations of empiricism and accuracy, sit uneasily with the demands of comic pleasure.

Comedy, to generalise, can rely upon surprise, incongruity, exaggeration, excess, ridicule and non-rationality. Comedy can "be thought of as a means of opening up the possibility of multiple perspectives" (Stott, 2005: 8); it is a way of representing and seeing the world *differently*. It would seem logical that a representation of the world as *different* would not be coherent with also seeing this representation as true. The audience's experience of authenticity is, as Adams (1993) discusses at some length, related to *Yes Minister's* setting in a world that is largely "realistic and authentic, replicating actual locations as far as possible." This emphasises the visual element but the dialogue, plots and characters are seen as authentic too, especially Sir Humphrey, whose often-underhand character and upper class diction and obfuscatory vocabulary is often described as accurate and funny:

What really goes on in Westminster [...] So funny and at the same time so true, telling tales of government back-handers,



corruption, arse-covering and general pussyfooting. And who could possibly overlook Sir Humphrey's impeccable ability to answer questions by not actually answering questions? Gordon Brown, your lot have nothing on this guy! (Amazon, 2009)

The plots also depict governmental tasks that are recognisable as authentic by their concern with administrative intricacy. Hacker and Humphrey spend their time allocating spending, creating policy and negotiating. The discourse of authenticity around *Yes Minister* is certainly in part a reaction to its sets, scripts and plots. The contradiction lies in viewers acknowledging that *Yes Minister* is a sitcom or a comedy, possessing the qualities of disruption mentioned above, *and* evaluating this comic representation as able to reveal truth about what politics is "really like." A logical analysis would clearly state that comic exaggeration is incompatible with an accurate representation; so if viewers are *not* interpreting a situation comedy according to cold rationality, what are they doing?

It is important to state that this contradictory reaction does not appear to be the result of a mindless acceptance. The viewers represented in the reports and those writing on the internet seem to have engaged with and thought about *Yes Minister*. However, the way in which they respond to *Yes Minister* is clearly not an analytical one; it cannot be compared to Adams (1993), when after careful discussion he categorically concluded that "the series [is located] in the realm of comedy" (1993: 79) and rejected the notion that it might possess any relationship to a political reality. Most viewers do not exhibit a desire to make such analytical and categorical distinctions. A few do offer a more nuanced version of authenticity by suggesting that *Yes Minister* is an exaggerated version of the truth but these subtleties do not dominate the reception and often act as caveats to the subsequent evaluation of authenticity.

It has been observed that individuals tend to emphasise the experiences and feelings evoked by a popular culture text when they write reviews for internet websites (Söderlund, 2004: 71-72; cited in Steiner, 2008). The reception of *Yes Minister* is dominated by a sense that viewers' obtain pleasure from experiencing the series' comic material *and* in experiencing it as authentic. Denying either one of those readings would therefore reduce the viewers' pleasure. This popular judgement to *Yes Minister* often depends on evaluating "the comic" entirely separately from "the authentic." This separation can be observed in the comments where these are discussed in different sentences, suggesting they are seen as unrelated by some viewers:

I work for a public sector organisation and there are so many similarities in the way business (sic) is done, it is uncanny. I loved the humour *too* [...] Funny, witty, clever, in short every-



thing a comedy should be. *It's also* still topical despite being 25 years old.

The show, *despite* its obvious comic content, gave a very real portrait of the bureaucratic red tape that almost all government has. (IMDB, 2008; my emphasis)

The evaluative division between “the comic” and “the authentic” suggests a starting point for how the paradoxical idea of ‘comic authenticity’ is felt by viewers. Comic authenticity relies on an assumption that the show’s sitcom nature *does not affect* its authenticity. This can be explained in several ways.

### **Hypotheses on Comedy Spectatorship: 1. The Natural Sitcom**

It is noticeable that the generic demands on the formal, representational and narrative aspects of *Yes Minister*-as-a-sitcom largely go without evaluation in the viewer comments and the term “sitcom” is only used 20 times in 160 comments. This demonstrates a lack of engagement with the fact that *Yes Minister* is a sitcom that fits into the classic pre-recorded studio setup. It includes the stable situation of the ministry itself, the predictable behaviour of the three character types, the proscenium arch-style three-camera setup and laughter track from the studio audience. Unlike the scripts, sets and performances these aspects go unmentioned and are almost never evaluated in the reception. I want to claim that these typical sitcoms characteristics are unarticulated because they are part of a television practice that is so natural that they do not need to be discussed. As a consequence these textual aspects acquire no legitimate role within an evaluation of *Yes Minister* and therefore allow the political aspects of the show to be evaluated *as if* they operated independently within the text.

The concept of “natural” television practices is taken from Ang’s engagement with Hall’s (1980a) encoding/decoding model. Ang questions the likelihood of the viewer always “decoding” television, saying:

It becomes possible to question the relevance of the concept of decoding, with its connotations of analytical reasoning, for describing the viewer’s activity of making sense of a text, as watching television is usually experienced as a ‘natural’ practice, firmly set within the routines of everyday life [...] It seems reasonable to assume that the ‘naturalness’ of the experience of watching television has an effect on the ways in which individual texts are received and dealt with. (Ang, 1996: 21)

These reception sources clearly suggest that viewers of *Yes Minister* are actively engaging with and decoding the show’s narratives and characters

("I am convinced it really happens as you portray it") but are not doing the same with the generic elements related to the sitcom and comedy characteristics. This is because the sitcom has become a "natural" part of the television institution; by 1980 the sitcom was a well-established format that was a regular part of British television and the BBC's schedules. The laughter track and the camera setup would have been a "natural" and transparent part of watching comedy on television; the show's formal sitcom aspects are subordinated and effaced as viewers focus on the experience of comedic pleasure.

This evaluative lacuna also expands to include the generic expectations of comedy; namely constructed situations that generate laughter via creative methods of distortion (exaggeration, incongruity, etc.). In *Yes Minister* the discussion of these 'natural' aspects of television situation comedy are discursively subordinated to the 'unnatural' aspects of *Yes Minister*. The experience of political authenticity is therefore enjoyed and evaluated without reference to comedy because they are discursively and generically separate. The limitations of this hypothesis lie in the fact that while most viewers do not discuss the series as a "sitcom," the majority of them describe and discuss its comic aspects. The suggestion that *Yes Minister's* authenticity relies on a *complete* disregard of the series' comic nature in favour of its political content therefore cannot be sustained, especially when it is the quality of *Yes Minister's* comedy that attracts significant praise. However, we can see that *Yes Minister's* generically-defined formal aspects do go without comment and that the series' comic character can be said to be discursively reduced through its "naturalness."

## **Hypotheses on Comedy Spectatorship: 2. Serious comedy**

*Yes Minister* distinguishes itself as unconventional or "unnatural" due to its representation of politics; its subject matter distinguishes it as atypical for a sitcom. The BBC's audience reports records: "a refreshing change" many said from the usual domestic comedy." *Yes Minister* also marks itself out as different by representing settings usually out of sight; Erving Goffman (1990) wrote about the concept of "back regions," areas where individuals with a visible social role are out of the public eye. The everyday business in a Minister's office is a "back region" that citizens typically have no access to. Furthermore in 1980 seeing politicians at work would have been a novelty because television broadcasts from Parliament—now so common—only began in 1989. By representing the world of politics *Yes Minister* set itself apart from the other sitcoms that showed working class workplaces or family life.

Representing politicians and government is not simply an act of differentiation from other sitcoms. Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) notion of cultural capital explains how symbolic power is obtained through familiarity with spe-

cific forms of culture; enjoyment and knowledge of these forms allows an individual to position themselves in a social hierarchy. Within television, programming based around news, current affairs and documentary generally receives more praise and produces more cultural capital for broadcasters than comedy. *Yes Minister's* use of political representations enabled viewers to associate the sitcom with the "serious" discourse of factual television, while also being coherent with the associations with "quality" established by *Yes Minister's* understated performances, dialogue-centric comedy and visual verisimilitude. The terms "subtle," "very clever," "witty" (BBC WAC) and "quiet style of humour" indicate that enjoying *Yes Minister* was related to appreciating a mode of comedy different from, and—by the associations of quality—better than, broad, laugh-out-loud hilarity. This was a "clever" sitcom about politics and was therefore coherent with the discourses of factual television, supporting the reading of the series as authentic and true.

However, not all viewers interpreted the combination of politics and comedy as "clever." The small collection of negative comments gives access to other ways that *Yes Minister* was evaluated. The audience research reports note that some viewers found the series "too slow" (WAC BBC) or "boring and unfunny" (WAC BBC). Such comments obviously show that these viewers did not gain comic pleasure from *Yes Minister*. They apparently understood that the series was intended to be a comedy but found their expectations frustrated, perhaps anticipating more straightforward and rapid fire comic pleasures. It is likely that this displeasure was the result of the political content or the quality mode of comedy; in these cases incompatible comic tastes rendered *Yes Minister* simply not funny enough. Another comment demonstrates how pleasure can be undermined if the series is seen as *too* comic. *Guardian* writer Peter Fiddick initially expressed disappointment when a factual error was made in the first episode:

It didn't spoil the joke [...] but a comedy aiming admirably higher than knockabout gags will be sharp in its detail – the more we can believe it, the funnier it will be. (Fiddick, 1980b)

He also described *Yes Minister* as a "jokey view of Whitehall life" (Fiddick, 1980c), implicitly rejecting the discourse of comic authenticity, and writing "I would not say *Yes Minister* is the sharpest thing since Mort Sahl but in an age where the nearest to political comment is Janet Brown in a Maggy Thatcher wig, it deserves nursing" (Fiddick, 1980b). Fiddick, writing for the left-leaning *Guardian* and just after the victory of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative party, appears to have expected *Yes Minister* to be a cutting political commentary and been disappointed at its lack of sharpness. We can also see that Fiddick is suggesting that comic authenticity relies on the appropriate combination of comedy and authenticity; if

it is too jokey then it loses its sharpness, and if it makes factual errors then comic pleasure is reduced.

These two comments highlight that the reception of comic authenticity of *Yes Minister* was by no means the only way of responding to the series. Some viewers appear to have found it unfunny because they found what others described as “clever” comedy to be only boring, while Fiddick seems to feel that ‘knockabout’ comedy weakens political comment and authenticity. Although *logically* contradictory, the audience reception shows that comedy and authenticity are in fact discursively necessary for *Yes Minister’s* pleasures to be enjoyed. These viewers highlight the fact that the contradictory “funny and true” response relies upon enjoying both the comedy *and* the authenticity.

### **Hypotheses on Comedy Spectatorship: 3. Comic Coherence**

The discussion above suggests that comic authenticity relies on a close relationship between the way in which politics are represented and the comedy is created. The negative comments above show that audiences had expectations of *Yes Minister* that could be frustrated and that these frustrations can be traced to the relationship between the comedy and the representation of politics. This chapter has implicitly divided the series’ comic aspects from its representation of politics but the relationship between the two expressed in the reception suggests that they should be evaluated simultaneously. It appears that enjoying *Yes Minister* as authentic comedy requires enjoying its comedy, its political representation *and* the specific way in which they are combined. The pleasures of *Yes Minister’s* authenticity lie in viewing this combination as *appropriate*—it relies upon what I am calling comic coherence. It was an inappropriate or incoherent combination of comedy and politics that made Fiddick damn *Yes Minister* with faint praise. This third hypothesis suggests that the reception of *Yes Minister* as authentic does not lie in viewers’ attempts to discursively subordinate the show’s comedy form or privilege its political representations (although certain aspects of both these behaviours can be observed) but because *Yes Minister* manages to present its comedy and its politics in a way that do not contradict each other and are seen as coherent and appropriate.

I want to propose that the reception to *Yes Minister* shows that viewers’ enjoyment of the series is based on the dual nature of many of its textual elements. [4] That is, in *Yes Minister* an element that could be seen as predominantly comic can also be read as an authentic political representation. Vice versa, an element that could be seen as predominantly an accurate political representation is also used to generate comic pleasure. This is possible because the comic elements are written to be coherent

with assumptions about politics and the representations of politics fit within these assumptions whilst being used to create a joke.

This can be seen in several examples. As Fiddick noted, the titles are drawn by Gerald Scarfe, a noted political cartoonist; this associates *Yes Minister* with discourses of politics and Scarfe's authorial persona evokes authenticity. Scarfe paints the Houses of Parliament and caricatures the leads in his recognisable style, while a suitably bombastic theme tune, with brass and percussion, evokes the pageantry and ceremony associated with events such as the state opening of Parliament. These elements are also clearly part of the series' sitcom nature; the theme is written by Ronnie Hazlehurst, a composer and arranger of many BBC sitcoms and light entertainment shows. Scarfe's cartoons also depict the actors, providing a representation of Paul Eddington who had shot to fame following his appearance in another BBC sitcom, *The Good Life* (BBC 1975-1978). We can therefore see how the elements of the titles are implicated in both the series' political authenticity and its generic sitcom status.

This can also be seen clearly in the characters of Hacker and Sir Humphrey. Viewers see Hacker as an authentic representation of an ineffectual politician and Sir Humphrey as the authentic representation of a manipulative civil servant. Hacker's ineffectual nature is therefore part of his authenticity:

Hacker is green to the job and somewhat inept with the civil servants continually getting one over him. That trend continues throughout [...] It's an excellent demonstration of just who holds the power in government and it's easy to believe it to be true (Amazon, 2009)

His lack of ministerial ability is also part of the series comedy:

With Fowld's Bernard trying to keep the peace and Eddington's Hacker wondering how he can get anything [done,] it's just a masterpiece of British comedy. (Amazon, 2009)

The reading of the character of Hacker as both funny and authentic relies on a coherence between the comedy and the political representation. This means that the comedy must not only not contradict political assumptions but also conform to them. Sir Humphrey's regular monologues, delivered to an often flabbergasted Hacker, are read both as authentic representations of how civil servants actually speak *and* intelligent comedy: "A genuinely fine example of subtle British humour and the fine use of bureaucratese language" (Amazon, 2009). The quality style of comedy is cohe-

rent with the rarefied atmosphere of a ministerial office; it is this comic coherence that allows the reading of comic authenticity.

According to this formulation, *Yes Minister's* dialogue, performances and narratives take on a dual nature, providing the pleasures of both comedy and authenticity at the same time. Both comedy and authenticity are enjoyed by viewers, with each comic element operating in a mutually supportive relationship with authentic elements and vice versa; they generate more pleasure to the extent that they can be read as both funny *and* authentic. Brett Mills discusses a similar idea when he argues that

In sitcom, realism instead points to a suitability between the di-egesis created by the programme and its humour, so that series are commended because it appears as if the comedy arises 'naturally' out of the character and situation. (Mills, 2004: 141)

*Yes Minister* is slightly different in that the comedy appears to arise naturally out of viewers' pre-existing assumptions about politics. *Yes Minister* evokes readings that demonstrate an *external* coherence, allowing elements to exhibit a dual quality of politics *and* comedy. Mills describes another way in which *Yes Minister* provokes a dual reading. He argues that one group of viewers adopted an alternative viewing to most, citing MPs who were fans of the show when "it was intended as a scathing satire on the excesses of government" (Mills, 2004: 141). He suggests that the MPs produced a reading that was counter to the dominant reading. However, I am here suggesting a different kind of duality; rather than two readings from two different groups of viewers, the comic coherence of *Yes Minister* relies on a coherent duality within the one viewer's reaction: the coherence of *Yes Minister's* comedy and its political representations gives viewers the textual material needed to describe a comedy motivated by both exaggeration *and* realism as authentic.

The comic coherence discernible within the main trends of viewers' comments about *Yes Minister* relies upon a match between comedy style and perceptions about political culture. *Yes Minister's* view of government is still that of an arena inhabited by an Establishment who try to control those who are less aware than them. While Hacker may be a more modern persona, he is still forced to enter into a political culture defined by its traditional décor, its old boys networks of favours and bargains, its faith in status and the status quo. Thus while the series exists within discourses that have their origins in the 1970s, the aesthetics of the series—performance, mise-en-scène, dialogue—are those associated with traditional British politics and the upper classes whose preserve it was until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The comedy style deployed by *Yes Minister* is coherent with this; with its implicit associations with comedy of manners



and verbally dextrous characters, the series deploys a comedy form commonly used to represent the foibles and faults of the middle and upper classes. The behaviour of the characters and the plots, informed by these comedy forms, is reminiscent of Wilde, Coward and PG Wodehouse, authors who are also associated with the etiquette of a traditional Englishness that reverberates with the representations in *Yes Minister*. It can be seen that this was recognised by some viewers—the term was used in Stephen Fry’s *Sunday Times* article “Comedy of Manners in Corridors of Power” (Fry, 1980). [5]

Because seeing *Yes Minister* as authentic depends on a seeing the series as comically coherent it therefore depends upon recognising the political representations and the references that evoke its associations with tradition, gentility and education, *and* enjoying style of humour, while also seeing both as coherent. Such judgements must therefore be founded upon individual viewers’ personal opinions and tastes; one would not describe a representation as authentic unless one believed in its veracity to some degree. Therefore, we are able to see that when viewers describe *Yes Minister* as authentic, they are communicating something about their own political views. One dominant viewpoint with the reception is the articulation of cynicism.

### Coherence and Political Opinions

*Yes Minister*’s cynical view of powerful men behaving selfishly and unscrupulously plays a key part in the show’s reception as authentic. Others have recognized this cynicism. Oakley (1982) criticised *Yes Minister* for representing politics as “implicitly pointless and doomed to failure” (1982: 67) and Adams provides some context in the two enquiries into the Civil Service (1993: 65-66) that took place in the previous decades. The representation of politics as ineffective and morally bankrupt appears to be entirely coherent with many viewers own ways of understanding politics. Sir Humphrey is said to have “aptly encapsulated ‘the cunning and deviousness’ of the part” (BBC WAC); the show is claimed to give “a very real portrait of the bureaucratic red tape that almost all government has” (IMDB, 2008) and someone even felt that “this series will really help one [...] by realising the evils inherent in a human being” (Amazon, 2008). The view that politicians are corrupt or impotent hardly needs contextualising, and it is clear that this ideological verisimilitude is a significant element in the discourse of authenticity. People may not have precisely believed this about individual civil servants and ministers of state but they would have been aware and sympathetic with the ideology of political cynicism. Andy Medhurst has claimed that “above all else, comedy is an invitation to belong” (2007: 19), elaborating that comedy brings people together in common recognition of what is funny. Furthermore, Husband (1988) has argued in relation to sitcom and race that “what you find in

[...] a programme is a function of what attitudes and values you bring to it" (1988: 162). It would appear that a significant part of the pleasure of *Yes Minister* lies in individuals realising that their cynical view of politics is shared by others, not least others at the BBC.

It is clear that the authentic comedy described by viewers is in some ways a paradoxical position. However, I have argued that this way of interpreting *Yes Minister* can be shown to be entirely explicable within the context of television convention, cultural hierarchies and the ways the text creates comedy and represents politics. This reception demonstrates one way viewers have reacted to television hybridity and how spectatorship can be viewed as both a competition between the hybridised discourses or, as the comic coherence demonstrates, an apparently seamless combination.

## Notes

[1] "The subject of comedy of manners is the way people behave, the manners they employ in a social context; the chief concerns of the characters are sex and money [...]; the style is distinguished by the refinement of raw emotional expression and action into the subtlety of wit and intrigue." (Hirst, 1979: 1)

[2] All quotations in this paragraph taken from Audience Research Reports VR/80/115 and VR/80/179 in BBC WAC R9/7/164.

[3] The scale also includes "B," "C" and "C-."

[4] By "textual element" I simply mean a part of the text that could be isolated and described as a coherent unit, e.g. a character, line of dialogue, piece of music, narrative event or set.

[5] Fry himself would develop a persona centred around such comedy, such as playing Jeeves in *Jeeves and Wooster* (ITV 1990-1993) and Oscar Wilde in the feature film *Wilde* (Gilbert, 1997).

## References

Adams, John (1993) *Yes, Prime Minister: The Ministerial Broadcast: Social Reality and Comic Realism in Popular Television Drama*, in George W. Brandt (ed.), *British Television Drama in the 1980s*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 62-85.



Ang, Ien (1985) *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination*. London: Routledge.

Banks-Smith, Nancy (1986) The Hacker Manifesto, *The Guardian*, 12 January, p. 12.

BBC (1980) Audience Research Reports VR/80/115 and VR/80/179: BBC WAC R9/7/164.

BBC (2004) Britain's Best Sitcom – The Case for Yes Minister. (Updated 6 April 2007.) Available at:  
[http://web.archive.org/web/20070406081848/http://www.bbc.co.uk/sitcom/advocate\\_yesminister.shtml](http://web.archive.org/web/20070406081848/http://www.bbc.co.uk/sitcom/advocate_yesminister.shtml) [accessed 26 April 2008]

Bourdieu, Pierre (1986) The Forms of Capital, in John G. Richardson (ed.). *Handbook for Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. New York: Greenwood Press, pp. 241-258.

Bobo, Jacqueline (1995) *Black Women as Cultural Readers*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Bodroghkozy, Aniko (2003) Is This What You Mean by Color TV?: Race, Gender and Contested Meanings in *Julia*, in Joanne Morreale (ed.), *Critiquing the Sitcom: A Reader*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press. pp. 129-149.

Berg, Bruce L. (2008) *Qualitative Research Methods*. 7th edition. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Cripps, Thomas (2003) *Amos 'n' Andy* and the Debate Over American Racial Integration, in Joanne Morreale (ed.), *Critiquing the Sitcom: A Reader*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press. pp. 25-40.

Curran, James and Seaton, Jean (2003) *Power Without Responsibility*. London: Routledge.

Fiddick, Peter (1980a) Television and Radio, *The Guardian*, 23 February. p. 16.

Fiddick, Peter (1980b) Television and Radio, *The Guardian*, 26 February. p. 9.

Fiddick, Peter (1980c) Television and Radio, *The Guardian*, 8 March. p. 16.

Fry, Stephen (1980) Comedy of Manners in Corridors of Power, *Sunday Times*, 2 March.

Grundy, Bill (1980a) Sharing Whitehall Secrets, *Evening Standard*, 26 February.

Goffman, Erving (1990) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. London: Penguin.

Gosling, Kenneth (1980) New TV Series Studies Corridors of Power, *The Times*, 18 February.

Hall, Stuart (2006) *Encoding/Decoding*, in Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas Kellner, *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 257-294.

Hallam, Julia (2005) Remembering *Butterflies*: The Comic Art of Housework, in Jonathan Bignell and Stephen Lacey (eds.), *Popular Television Drama: Critical Perspectives*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. pp. 34-50.

Hirst, David L. (1979) *Comedy of Manners*. London: Methuen.

Horner, Rosaline (1980) Tonight's Choice, *Daily Express*, 3 March. p. 27.

Husband, Charles (1988) Racist Humour and Racist Ideology in British Television, in Chris Powell and George E.C. Paton (eds.), *Humour in Society: Resistance and Control*. London: Macmillan Press. pp. 149-178.

IMDB (2008) IMDb User Reviews for *Yes, Minister* (1980). Available at: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0080306/usercomments?start=0> [Accessed 27 April 2008]

Jackson, Martin (1980b) Pick of the Day, *Daily Mail*, 25 February, p. 21.

Khan, Naseem (1980) Men From the Ministry, *Radio Times*, 23 February, pp. 12-13.

Medhurst, Andy (2007) *A National Joke*. London: Routledge.

Morley, David (1992) *The Nationwide Audience: Structure and Decoding*. London: BFI.

Oakley, Giles (1982) *Yes Minister*, in Jim Cook (ed.), *Television Sitcom: Dossier 17*. London: British Film Institute. pp. 66-79.

Murray, James (1980) A Comic Cut at Our Civil Service, *Daily Express*, 25 February, p. 25.

Neale, Steve and Krutnik, Frank (1990) *Popular Film and Television Comedy*. London: Routledge.

Sinclair, David (1980) Personal Choice, *The Times*, 25 February. p. 25.

Steiner, Ann (2008) Private Criticism in the Public Space: Personal Writing on Literature in Readers' Reviews on Amazon, *Participations* 5:2 (November) . Available at [http://www.participations.org/Volume%205/Issue%202/5\\_02\\_steiner.htm](http://www.participations.org/Volume%205/Issue%202/5_02_steiner.htm) [Accessed 15 December 2009]

Söderlund, Petra (2004) *Läsarnas nätverk: Om bokläsare och internet*. Avd. för litteratursociologi: Uppsala.

Streicher, Lawrence.H. (1967) On a Theory of Political Caricature, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*. 9:4 (July), pp. 427-445.

White, Michael (1981) Men Behind the Ministry, *Radio Times*. 21-27 February, pp. 6-7.

## Filmography

*Yes, Minister* (BBC, 1980-1984)

*Yes, Prime Minister* (BBC 1986-1987)

## **The Representation by French Television of Building Construction Work in and around Paris during the 1960s**

*Jacob Paskins, University College London*

Building sites are an unavoidable part of city life. They are dirty, noisy and disruptive; they threaten to alter the face of a familiar place forever. But building work does not just cause irritation, it provides a fascinating spectacle too. As buildings grow daily, apparent chaos of the site is in fact highly organised. Full of different languages and hierarchies, the flow of bodies, materials and capital, building sites encompass the complexities of cities as a whole. The building site and the process of construction form crucial parts of the social and cultural history of Paris architecture of the 1960s.

Despite the richness of the organisation and culture of construction work, architecture magazines and architectural history monographs tend to favour photographs of buildings that have just been completed, and before anybody moves in to “mess it up” by working or living in them. While these reference documents suggest that architecture exists only at the moment when the paint has just dried, and not after, there is a long history of recording the construction of buildings, in painting, photography and, more recently, in film and television. Indeed, inspiration for my research on building sites comes in part from watching French cinema of the 1960s. I saw shots of road works in *A Bout de Souffle* (1960) and *Tirez sur le Pianiste* (1960); shots of cranes at building sites in La Defense and Nanterre in *Alphaville* (1965) and *La Chinoise* (1967); and saw a suburban semi-rural town facing demolition, and a vision of an imagined future Paris made from concrete, steel and glass, in *Mon Oncle* (1958) and *Playtime* (1967) respectively. If Paris and its suburbs are a favourite subject matter of these well-known films and others, they create onscreen a city under construction. Buildings are being built, as is public infrastructure such as motorways, railways and underground car parks. This work either looms in the background, discreetly or inconveniently, or is omnipresent as a spectacular protagonist. With building sites so difficult to ignore, scenes of construction work posed so many questions, and triggered a desire to pursue a historical study into the transformation of Paris.

I wanted to know more about the people involved in constructing the city. Clearly it would not only be a team of politicians, planners, architects and engineers, but would involve a giant work force of bricklayers, plasterers, drivers and labourers breaking their backs to create the modern city. Furthermore, and this is an idea taken from Jean Rouch’s episode “Gare du Nord” of the 1965 sketch film *Paris vu par...*, what did the neighbours think about all this work? Not only does construction work cause short-

term disruption such as traffic jams and noisy breakfasts, but it forces the inhabitants of a city so protective of its history and the old ways of life to experience abrupt urban change.

To write a history of the social experience of building construction work, one that tries to tell stories of the workers who built modern Paris, and stories of other people whose lives were affected by the urban transformation, my research requires material that traces ordinary lives. Much material exists, but urban historians have largely ignored it, and prefer to focus on politics and plans. If construction is mentioned, it often only tells who laid the foundation stone, which ministers were present, and who was the architect. After initial research in newspaper and trade union archives, I discovered films, television footage, private promotional films, and amateur footage from the 1960s as an invaluable source to learn of construction projects that are largely ignored by architectural histories of Paris. These documents also serve as a way to recover traces of ordinary lives, such as neighbours who complain about being forced to move home to make way for a new road. In contrast to a top-down approach to history, these little episodes are quickly forgotten over time, and rarely make the history books. Yet, because they give an alternative insight into the relationship between politics, planning and society they are no less important than recording the moment the prime minister came to declare the new road open. First an opening for me into the imagination of Paris of the 1960s, moving images now become primary source material – an archive to help write a history of the social experience of building construction work.

My task is facilitated by the state television archive in Paris, managed by l'Institut National de l'Audiovisuel (INA, or national audiovisual institute). Access to the archive is through one of sixty computers, equipped with a complete electronic catalogue. All available material is viewed on the same screen, either in digitised format direct from the server, or on VHS tape. The catalogue has dozens of search options, the most useful being keyword, name of programme and date of broadcast. It was possible to assemble over 70 documents broadcast between 1960 and 1969 simply by searching for *chantier* (building site). But if it was not too daunting to use the archive, trying to make sense of such a great pile of material certainly was.

During my accreditation interview, the archivist was surprised that an architectural historian would want to gain access to the television archives. While I quickly convinced her that there was material recording the construction of buildings and motorways, her reaction made me ask myself whether I was prepared well enough to understand and interpret the television documents I would find. This paper considers what it means methodologically for architectural history to use moving image archives as

source material, and interrogates the specificities of using a sophisticated and mostly digitised television archive. Attempting to understand archive television documents as representations, the second part of this paper interprets a selection of material uncovered in the INA archive in terms of television production, reception, and the wider contexts of politics and the building construction industry.

## Cine-Cities

Giuliana Bruno, whose work attempts to collapse disciplinary distinctions between fine art, film, architecture, urbanism and geography, asserts that, due to the spatiality of cinema, film studies needs to reposition itself from its literary roots to an architectural one (Bruno, 2002: 70). Using film as a site for thinking about the experience of the city questions rigid methodological boundaries of architectural history, which often relies on fixed visual representations such as drawings, plans and photographs. Often ignored theoretically and institutionally, film also has a historic presence in architecture. The collection of essays in *La ville au cinéma*, a cross-disciplinary enquiry by architects, filmmakers and literary critics, published in 2005, shows the urgency to disseminate relationships between built and imagined cities. In his contribution to the book, Jean-Yves de Lépinay observes that one of the reasons researchers of any discipline might not use moving image archives is that they may be put off by the difficulty in accessing audiovisual archives, and by a lack of knowledge of how to interpret film. However, with some understanding of film production, more than a century of cinema can transform into an invaluable archive, especially for architectural, urban and social history (de Lépinay, 2005: 43).

Moving images provide more than simply an ephemeral record of everyday urban experience for the historian interested in construction work. The city is a treasure trove for understanding history, and the creation of screen cities by filmmakers provides another very specific representation of the past, fixed within limits of time and space. Architect and philosopher Thierry Paquot writes that “La ville [...] ne cesse d’accumuler le temps. Elle se prend pour une éponge à souvenirs... Et tout en elle témoigne du passé” (“The city constantly accumulates time. It likes to think of itself as a sponge of memories... and everything in it bears witness to the past.”) (Paquot, 2005: 115). When the historian is interested in the unrepeatable moment of the city under construction, film offers invaluable traces of the past, precisely because both building work and the recording and projection of film are moving, spatial and temporal processes. In its ability to produce images that represent the temporality and spatiality of the changing city, film creates a vision of the production of buildings and spaces that is unrepeatable, and which can otherwise seem quite abstract once construction work has ceased.

If I first had to critically acknowledge that the use of moving images is an important but rarely explored methodology for architectural and social history, I next realised that I could not go blind into using the television archive itself and simply use moving image footage as raw material. To give them meaning, I need to understand the systems of representation and reception of these images as they form a historical tradition of recording changes to the built environment.

### **In the Archive**

Of its six main collections, the material I viewed in the INA archive comes from the "fonds cinéma" (for the "fonds de presse filmée" newsreel collection) and the "fonds national de télévision" (the historic television collection, covering the years 1949-1974). At face value, the digital archive is far from the confusing and sometimes chaotic eighteenth-century police archives that Arlette Farge describes in her classic text *Le goût de l'archive*. Yet just because I have the material at my fingertips does not mean I possess any better critical tools necessary to make sense of my archive. For this reason, Farge's understanding of "old-fashioned," "dusty" archives is no less applicable to my slick digital material.

First, it is important when using any archive not to forget the relationship between traces of the past found in archives and the production of history. While often confused, the two are not interchangeable. Influenced by Michel Foucault, Farge writes:

L'archive est une brèche dans le tissu des jours, l'aperçu tendu d'un événement inattendu. En elle, tout se focalise sur quelques instants de vie de personnages ordinaires, rarement visités par l'histoire, sauf s'il leur prend un jour se rassembler en foules et de construire ce qu'on appellera plus tard de l'histoire. L'archive n'écrit pas de pages d'histoires. Elle décrit avec le mots de tous les jours le dérisoire et le tragique sur un même ton.

(The archive is a breach in the fabric of every day, a condensed insight into an unexpected event. In it, everything focuses on a few moments of the lives of ordinary characters, rarely visited by history, unless one day it takes masses of them to be reassembled to construct what will later be called history. The archive does not write pages of history. It describes with everyday words the pathetic and the tragic in equal tone.) (Farge, 1989: 13).

Objects found in the archive cannot be left in their raw state for "Leur histoire n'existe qu'au moment où on pose un certain type de questions et non au moment où on les recueille" ("Their history only exists at the moment when they are asked a certain type of question, and not at the mo-



ment when they are collected”) (Farge, 1989: 19). It is of course tempting to think the content of the archive is sufficient, especially if the material appears to say all or more than you could have dreamed of. Taking the traces of the past out of the archive and transferring them straight onto a page is not writing history, but reduces history to a dull narrative that simply regurgitates the material, and protects its from any critical analysis (Farge, 1989: 91).

Bearing this in mind, after my first month’s work viewing material in the television archive, I realised my task would be more than simply assembling a useful catalogue of anecdotal material. Sure, I compiled a long list of construction projects that have rarely before been examined, I have footage of working and living conditions of immigrant workers, and I have primary accounts of the devastation locals felt to see their homes being bulldozed. But if I left it at that, I would not be doing justice to the material and to the existence of the archive. If I looked hard enough, I probably could find this information elsewhere. What seems important about this material is that it is *television*.

As Farge warns: “les faits ne sont rien s’ils ne sont pas réinsérés dans les représentations qu’on a d’eux, représentations qui les réalimentent ensuite ou au contraire peuvent en diminuer la progression et l’acuité” (“Facts are meaningless unless they are reinserted into the representations we have of them, representations which later nourish them, or on the contrary, diminish their spread and acuteness”) (Farge, 1989: 121). For my purposes, then, I need to know about the genre of programme, or the technique of the film. In other words, recover the context of the material as it was originally produced and intended to be received. It is also necessary to think who the original audience was, and how they viewed this material in order to understand what they were being shown and for what reasons.

Using a mostly digital archive makes the problem of understanding how the material functions as representations even more acute. Of course digital video has a high quality image, and work is quick on the excellent cross-referenced catalogue. However, watched on a standard computer screen, the frame size and quality of all the material is rendered similar. In these circumstances, grasping the technical side of television production is rather obscured by the digitisation of the archive material. On the screens of INA, scrappy local news items are placed next to shimmering cinema newsreels, and it is all too easy to forget the difference between the two. Thirty-five millimetre cinema newsreels *Les Actualités françaises*, which were inherited by the television archive in 1969, with music soundtracks and high production quality are quite different to 16mm television programmes (Hoog, 2006: 46). Apart from the newsreels and ci-



nema films in 35mm format, most TV footage produced between 1949 and 1985, including television news and magazine magazines such as *Cinq Colonnes à la Une* and *Panorama*, is in 16mm film.

Newsreels (shown in cinemas each week from 1940 to 1969) and television programmes are not only originally made on very different physical supports, but also first broadcast in quite different places and to different audiences. My viewing of television news archives in particular is a very different experience to those who watched the news on the original day of broadcast. In the early years, most television was broadcast live. Between 1954 and 1974, a device called the *kinescope* (a camera that filmed a television screen) recorded live programmes and the television news (Hoog, 2006: 47). (The tell-tell sign that you are watching archive material emanating from the *kinescope* is the appearance of lines on the screen. These result from occasions when the original television screen and camera were not properly synchronised. But even for properly synchronised sequences, it is possible to check whether the material is a *kinescope* copy by consulting the daily reports of the controller of the television channels, which include a list of programmes that were kinescoped each day.) The purpose of the *kinescope* was to create a professional archive to be used by programme makers, so almost always the *kinescope* film was cut into pieces to be archived under subject matter, ready to be used again in news programmes when necessary (Hoog, 2006: 59). The consequence for the user of the television archive is that few complete news programmes exist with original presentation. A typical digitised daily news programme contains blanks between each news item, and unlike the radio news, it is not certain whether the order of items is that of the original broadcast. The *kinescope* procedure also explains why a number of news items are silent when viewed today: the commentary would have been added “live” and has not been preserved in the cutting process. All these circumstances make clear the different experience of viewing archive television and live broadcast television.

Additionally, watching television news that has been digitised means it is possible to jump directly – almost too directly – to the useful material. The precision of the catalogue takes the archive viewer straight to the exact hour of broadcast – at best news programmes are available as a whole, but it is tempting and easy to skip straight to the desired clip. With no need to trawl through the other material, the accuracy of the digital archive removes the wider context of an individual news item. There is little room for stumbling across surprises, beyond those that may appear through searches in the catalogue, and the danger remains that the researcher is guided by her or his initial ideas. But it is important to see the broader picture to understand what television’s agenda was. For example, did television news treat stories in similar way, or is criticism only re-

served for particular subjects? Farge warns against being too clear in advance of what to look for when first entering an archive. Seeing what is placed around the material that is of initial interest can uncover useful historical parallels and links that might otherwise be ignored. In stark contrast to the sophistication of the digital television archive, no French newspapers of the 1960s are digitised nor indexed. Forced to trawl through microfilms of newspapers in other parts of my research, I was able to read the wider politics of the French popular press.

Attempting to place my found footage in a context of production and reception, the remainder of this paper analyses, in some detail, examples of archive television footage that focus on construction projects in and around Paris in the 1960s. The building site finds itself on television for a number of reasons, including the announcement of state-financed projects, official visits, or under more scandalous circumstances. While television brings the building site into the living rooms of hundreds of thousands of people who are spatially distant from the work, it creates representations of construction projects and produces a narrative of urban transformation.

I am intrigued by French television coverage of construction work because the footage suggests a number of reasons why television was interested in showing work in progress. Across genres of programme, there are at least four strategies for using shots of building sites, which I explore below. These include footage of work as illustration for distraction, as background or decoration, as illustration to showcase technology, and as a visual spectacle. Paradoxically, while construction work is the focus of the following footage, in much of it the dirty, tiring and dangerous activity of physical labour is hauntingly absent, as is any insight into the individuals who worked on these projects. A final category of footage considers the wider social implications of construction work, beyond the confines of the building site. As demolition work and the increased scale of new architecture creates a rupture with the traditional urban form of Paris, television produces a discourse on what it is like to experience the emerging modern city. It also explores the social impact of the transformation of the built environment, such as how a collapsed distinction between the city and suburbs changed habits of everyday life.

### *Illustration as Distraction*

In the majority of television footage that shows workers on building sites, physical work is shown as an accompaniment to the main content of the story which has little to do with technical procedures or individual labourers. In the local television news programme “Interview Alain Griotteray” (*Journal de Paris*, 22 December 1964), the budget spokesman for Paris, Alain Griotteray-Brayance, explains how the newly voted budget of Paris is allocated. He announces that new hospitals and roads are being built,

and insists progress is being made with public financed projects, even though it may not seem apparent. The focus of the news item is very much the budget, but the footage of the interview is cut away to shots of construction work on boulevard périphérique. With no sound of the site, or commentary about the specific work being shown, it seems this footage has been added to distract from the minister's jargon, and to liven up the rather dense interview, full of facts and figures on public spending.

Shots of work in progress also illustrate the commentary of "Retrospective Paris Chantiers" (*Journal de Paris*, 30 December 1966). In the two years since the Grittoray interview, there is a growing sophistication in the narrative construction of this news piece, which at eight minutes in duration is lengthy compared to earlier news items. The images of construction work are not merely generic stock shots, but correspond with the spoken descriptions. This said, these exterior shots have no diegetic sound, so the attention remains on the eloquent and poetic spoken language of the narration. The male commentary resorts to the passive voice saying "En cette fin d'année 1966, Paris présente à nos yeux le spectacle d'une ville en pleine gestation: on démolit, on creuse, on bâtit" ("At the end of this year 1966, Paris presents for our eyes a spectacle in complete transformation: it is being demolished, dug up and built"), or "il faut des parkings – on les fait" ("car parks are needed, they're being made"). The vagaries of passive language and the use of the anonymous "on" excludes the people who are actually doing both the planning and the physical work.

The commentary suggests machines are somehow miraculously powering this work: "les grues de chantier dressent sous le ciel parisien leurs flèches grâcilles et puissantes" ("slender and powerful jibs of building site cranes stand erect under the Parisian skies"). It evokes a quasi-mythical transformation of Paris, akin to the changes to the city in the nineteenth century, that have become rooted in the folklore of Haussmann: "Jamais, depuis le baron Haussmann, on a autant remué de terre à Paris" ("Never, since Baron Haussmann, was so much earth moved in Paris"), or Zola: "Le métro express régional immerge ses caissons dans la Seine, tandis que ses tunnels avancent dans *Le Ventre de Paris*" ("The regional express metro submerges its concrete casing into the Seine, while its tunnels advance through *The Belly of Paris*"). The commentary makes clear the intended connection to grand scale city planning, evoking the historical layout of Paris to valorise the construction of a skyscraper – the Porte de Maillot tower is shown to be the natural ancestor of the classical street vistas of western Paris: "On étudie les plans d'un Paris plus beau, plus vaste, plus humain, comme cette maquette de l'aménagement de la Porte Maillot le montre" ("Plans are being made for a more beautiful, vast and human Paris, as this model of the Porte Maillot development shows").

Link to video "Retrospective Paris Chantiers" (*Journal de Paris*, 30 December 1966):

<http://www.ina.fr/economie-et-societe/education-et-enseignement/video/CAF97076586/retrospective-paris-chantiers.fr.html>

This rapid overview of work in Paris shown in "Retrospective Paris Chantiers" is uncritical, and, including interviews only with ministers, the result resembles a piece of Gaullist government propaganda. Journalists credit Charles de Gaulle with having grasped the power of the burgeoning state television in the late 1950s and early 1960s for his own political means. Indeed it is extraordinary to see the increase in television ownership during his presidential reign (3% of the population of France owned a television in 1958, 65% did so in 1969). Very quickly de Gaulle became known for his television addresses that were something of an institution, making 32 between 13 June 1958 and 21 December 1962 alone (Bourdon, 1994: 54). Daily newspapers such as *Le Parisien libéré* would excitedly announce a forthcoming speech and then print the full texts; *France-Soir* would even try to print a special edition on the night of the speech itself.

But it was no coincidence that the president had such privileged access to this ever increasingly popular form of media. As head of state, de Gaulle was the effective state owner of RTF, the French state radio and television company, which, with its single channel until 1964, had the monopoly over television and faced only emerging competition from commercial radio. Such was his power over RTF that de Gaulle successfully promoted and sold the French SECAM colour television system to the USSR over the German PAL system (Bourdon, 1994: 60). Of course it was by no means possible to have total control of what was broadcast on the television and de Gaulle's papers show that he occasionally criticised television journalism, stating that it should be the government's job to inform the public. An unconfirmed quote has the president saying "toute la presse est contre moi, j'ai la television, je la garde" ("All the press is against me; I've got the television, and I'm keeping it") (Bourdon, 1994: 59).

Unsurprisingly, opposition parties protested against television coverage during the Algeria crisis and electoral campaigns, claiming the news was Gaullist propaganda. The first decades of state television seems fraught with compromise for journalists eager to tell of the inequalities reigning during the years of economic boom, but who simply had no where else to work in French television broadcasting but with RTF (renamed ORTF in 1964). Under constant scrutiny of the Minister of Information, television news editors rarely lasted long in their post (Bourdon, 1994: 64-65). In April 1963, responding to the new format of the television news, Alain Peyrefitte (Minister of Information between November 1962 and January 1966) defensively declared: "Le JT n'est pas au gouvernement mais au public" ("Television news doesn't belong to the government but to the

public"). This remark came shortly after a survey revealed that half of all television viewers got their only dose of daily news by watching television (Winock, 1987: 90). Undeniably, state television news had a strong monopoly, and an owner it had to keep appeased.

If the cautiousness of news editors explains the uncritical reporting of new architectural and urban projects in Paris, one short sequence of "Interview Alain Griotteray," however, does suggest a criticism of the politician's promises, and is an example of how television producers attempted to keep a check on politicians without asking direct questions. While the politician speaks from within the television studio promising five new hospitals, the images cut to the plot of land for the new Ambroise Paré hospital, showing a project notice and the still empty construction site. This sequence complicates the idea that shots of building sites only function as distraction. By showing work very-much-not-in-progress, the editor subtly creates a narrative that puts pressure on the discourse of the state's modernisation process. The footage outside the interview space becomes an active agent, a window for people in their living rooms to check something is being done – or not – with taxpayers' money.

### **Footage of Work as Backdrop to Official Visits**

The representation of new architecture or of construction work on television often comes through a news item of an official visit. In between the ceremonies, speeches and descriptions of models and plans, any footage of building work seems to function as a backdrop to the visit, as scenery to show that some work is actually being done, but is rarely described in any detail. A typical example of television news coverage of an official visit is "M. Pompidou au Cours la Reine" (*JT 20H*, 18 February 1965), in which Prime Minister Pompidou opens the construction site of the *voie express* (central Paris express route), accompanied by Marc Jacquet, Minister of Public Works and Transport, and Raymond Haas Picard, Prefect of Paris. The prefect explains in an interview that the expressway will enable driving through Paris without the need to stop at traffic lights.

Link to video of "M. Pompidou au Cours la Reine" (*JT 20H*, 18 February 1965):

<http://www.ina.fr/economie-et-societe/environnement-et-urbanisme/video/CAF94060126/m-pompidou-au-cours-la-reine.fr.html>

Similarly, "Visite des réalisations municipales à Nogent sur Marne" (*Journal de Paris*, 9 September 1967), follows Roland Nungesser's visit to the construction site of social housing in Nogent-sur-Marne, an eastern suburb of Paris. This news item offers a photogenic opportunity for the housing minister, surrounded by local dignitaries, to lay a foundation stone for a nautical centre. Some shots carefully frame workers looking down at the visitors from the top of their scaffolding. Framed separately,

they are kept at a distance from the party on film, as well as in the visit. The activity of physical work functions as a backdrop to the visit; scenery that is left un-described. Excluding workers from the narrative of the piece upholds a conception of public work that places more value on the financiers and administrators than in the manual labourers. It might seem surprising that news editors chose to film a not particularly photogenic suburban construction site, but it is likely the inclusion of this piece stems directly from the political weight of Nungesser, who also happened to be mayor of Nogent.

The main focus of the news item “Début travaux Préfecture Nanterre: interview Préfet Boitel” (*Journal de Paris*, 20 July 1967), is the presentation of a model of the new administrative buildings, departmental courts and social housing blocks in Nanterre, the newly formed administrative centre of the Hauts-de-Seine department. The images of the interview are cut by shots of excavation work for the preparation of the foundations for the new buildings. Once again taking second place in the narrative, these shots have no diegetic sound, and we continue to hear the words of the prefect’s presentation. In this piece, however, the footage offers the closest yet to an engagement with the on-site labourers. Shots show Claude Boitel, the suited new prefect, enjoying a ride on a mechanical digger, while a vested worker apparently explains how the machine works.

### **Scenes of Work to Showcase Organisation and Technical Prowess – Nationalism**

Rather than using generic shots to illustrate news commentary, sometimes scenes of work are more specifically connected with the subject in hand. The detailed footage of work, however, does not necessarily suggest any concern about the physical or technical skills of individual workers, rather it is used as a showcase of new techniques that France’s engineers have developed to produce spectacular results. The section of episode fifty-three of *Les Coulisses de l’Exploit* entitled “Trois mille tonnes en mouvement” (18 May 1966) is a report on the construction of a new stadium at Longchamps racecourse. A monthly programme first transmitted on 13 December 1961, normally broadcast at 8:40 or 9:15 pm on the first channel, *Les Coulisses de l’Exploit* was a popular programme that showed a compilation of approximately five- to ten-minute segments of marvellous feats, from muscle men to mountain climbers and magicians. Almost like a freak show, placing this item next to one on a Javanese sword swallower suggests that construction is an equally extraordinary, superhuman achievement.

In this episode, an engineer explains the need to install a new stadium at Longchamps in just five months. The new stand is constructed next to the old one while the latter is being demolished. The new structure then must



be slid on rails to its final fixed location, and much of the film sequence shows the delicate task of sliding the stadium slowly into place. Although this was the first time the procedure had been carried out, the programme provides little technical information to explain the successful functioning of this exploit, and the viewer is left to watch in awe as the giant structure apparently glides effortlessly into place, like a ship slowly launching. For all the mind-boggling details of the size and weight of the stadium, the piece is far more an attempt to show a visual spectacle than a desire to transmit engineering knowledge. Any technical information that might be disclosed is designed to amaze rather than educate the viewer. While some shots show some workers adjusting valves, any physical labour is almost entirely removed by the editing of the shots. The programme makers place the emphasis on triumphant engineering procedures, that seemingly only require a few twists of cogs, and the commentary affirms that the successful manoeuvre is a "victory of technique."

Link to video of *Les Coulisses de l'Exploit* (18 May 1966):

<http://www.ina.fr/economie-et-societe/vie-economique/video/CPF04006722/trois-mille-tonnes-en-mouvement.fr.html>

In the news item "Pose dernier element pont Charenton" (*Journal de Paris*, 14 October 1968), a male commentator explains the spectacle of the construction of the Charenton bridge, a key component of the boulevard périphérique. An interviewer speaks to M. Martin, the bridge's chief engineer, who explains the procedures in the prefabrication and construction of the concrete shell elements. While we see close-up and relevant footage of work in progress, the spotlight is very much placed on the technology and engineers, not the skill of the workers. If the clip emphasises technique, the language remains that of the non-specialist. Indeed, in describing the bridge construction as a "technique moderne et avant-garde" ("modern and avant-garde technology"), and describing the process of placing the final prefabricated element in place with glue as "révolutionnaire, mais très efficace" ("revolutionary, but very effective"), the narrator betrays a casual use of terminology. Even M. Martin, explaining the structure of the 300-metre long, ten lane wide bridge from within one of the prefabricated elements, is careful to use terms that television viewers would understand.

If the representation of technological prowess by French television tries to avoid specialist jargon, it does uphold a particular vision of modern construction that is commonly found in trade journals. Modern architecture and construction is shown to be the triumph of industrial technique. Representations of the assembly of prefabricated systems suggest machines replace the body's physical efforts, and workers appear as passive bystanders, or are made invisible. If editors of journals favour photographs

devoid of signs of labour, the *mise-en-scène* of construction work by television also edits out the input of workers, by not including diegetic sound of the site, or by mentioning the role of the workers in the commentary. While the Charenton bridge piece does show workers, and physical work (such as the hand of a worker smearing glue on to the edge of a prefabricated element), this news item represents workers as anonymous cogs in a mechanised process, under supervision of the “experts.” When Martin says the process of fitting the final piece within an eight-centimetre gap is a “spectacle” that the camera should not miss, he waves his hand towards the bridge in the background, suggesting once the calculations are made, no further effort is required. Such is the confidence of the engineer (and indeed the respect of the television producer towards the status of elite French engineering schools), Martin is shown smoking a pipe during the interview. Similarly, the engineer in “Trois mille tonnes en mouvement” gives his interview with his hands in his pockets, as if asserting the image of modern engineering as a technique that removes all manual labour.

Furthermore, in this piece, both the engineer and commentator speak in the passive voice: the engineer states:

[Les elements préfabriqués] sont accoulés environ une semaine à quinze jours avant d’être mis en place. Les éléments sont apportés à leur destination définitive par moyen de grue [...] puis sont liés les uns aux autres par des câbles de précontraints suivant un procédé qui a été mis en oeuvre par notre entreprise.

(The prefabricated elements are poured about a week or two before being put in place. The elements are carried to their final destination by a crane [...] and are linked together by pre-constrained cables, following a procedure developed by our company.)

Here, spoken language, as well as the accompanying images, excludes the physical processes of work.

Link to video of “Pose dernier element pont Charenton” (*Journal de Paris*, 14 October 1968):

<http://www.ina.fr/economie-et-societe/environnement-et-urbanisme/video/CAF97080237/l-echangeur-routier-de-bercy.fr.html>

Historians of the Gaullist regime often claim the pain of the loss of France’s colonies, especially Algeria, was cushioned by the economic growth and consumer culture of the sixties. Throughout the years of his presidency (1958-1969), de Gaulle placed much effort in convincing the population that France was one of the strongest countries in the world, and, desperate to show that while its colonial era might be over, France remained a great nation (Winock, 1987: 41). For years France had fol-



lowed in the shadows of the United States in terms of economic development and wished to strengthen its position on the international stage. Financially dependent on substantial American loans after World War II until 1959, France symbolically relaunched its currency in 1960, and the new franc marked the Gaullist dream of financial independence. In seeking national grandeur and splendour, de Gaulle also desired military independence (established with the first French atomic bomb in 1960, and the withdrawal from NATO in 1966), the defence of the French language against English, and the repositioning of France as the centre of international diplomatic relations (he received both the President of the United States and the Soviet Premier) (Winock, 1987: 42, 155, 196).

In terms of economic development, as France lost its grip on overseas territories, de Gaulle launched a new type of nationalist politics that began to turn its focus away from colonies towards the mainland. For de Gaulle, one of the ways France could pursue its ambitions to position itself in the high ranks of global politics and economy was to pursue technological development in the country. Not only would this boost the internal infrastructure and economy, it would also act as a beacon for the skills of French engineering, and act as a way of forging new links with former colonies (Hecht, 1998: 33). Selling technology abroad, such as prefabricated construction systems and engineering know how, as well as relying on resources from former colonies, especially labour, de Gaulle initiated a type of neo-colonialism that was channeled into the economic development of France.

Television footage of engineering triumphs evokes this particular brand of French nationalism associated with de Gaulle, which in part promoted the age-old idea of France as a nation of great builders constructing a modern nation. These representations celebrate construction work as a sign of the technical prowess of a France that wished to assert itself at the cutting edge of progress, and as a country that could stand proud as economically, politically and technologically strong and independent. In parallel, a new generation of French engineers and politicians engaged in economic development and infrastructural construction saw themselves to have taken on the task of repairing the shame of defeat in the Second World War (Delouvrier, 1994).

### **Scenes of Work as Visual Spectacle**

Construction work also appears on French television of the 1960s because of the visually spectacular nature of building sites that suits representation by moving images. "La Maison de la Radio" (*Edition spéciale*, 5 September 1963) is a visit of the newly completed state radio and television headquarters in Paris. As well as shots of the half empty building, there

are interviews with the assistant architect and two engineers. Although an extended arts news item, the most spectacular footage is dramatic, plunging and moving aerial shots. When fixed on the ground, the filmmakers use experimental camera angles and framing to film the new building, and excited by their new home, emphasise the daring Modernist aesthetic of the Maison de la Radio through inventive camera work. The television images would have been as startling for viewers as the aluminium and glass exteriors of the giant round building in the sixteenth arrondissement.

Link to video of « La Maison de la Radio » (*Edition spéciale*, 5 September 1963) :

<http://www.ina.fr/art-et-culture/architecture/video/CAF93073298/la-maison-de-la-radio.fr.html>

*Naissance d'une faculté* (20-minute documentary, 1966) is a beautiful film produced for French state television by an external company, *La grande ourse*. In this programme, the filmmakers place great attention to detail in the framing and montage of shots of construction work, which creates highly aestheticised representations of building work and modern architecture. This documentary about the construction of the new faculty of sciences at Jussieu is an early colour-television film produced a year before the widespread introduction of colour television in France, with a specially composed avant-garde soundtrack. Long rising shots taken from cranes emphasise the stark angularity of the building's skeleton, and the slow, detailed shots, with no diegetic sound, create images that contradict the apparent noise and disorder normally associated with building sites. Carefully framed shots of silhouettes of the building frame, and figures of people slowly moving along the scaffolding, make workers appear as acrobats. These shots create representations that remove physical work and specific construction related activity from the narrative of the construction process of buildings. Similarly to representations in specialist trade journals, these shots give the impression that modern architecture is simply slotted together effortlessly.

Building workers' unions were certainly not happy with the idea of construction workers being shown as acrobats or sports stars. Responding to such common assumptions about building workers, Jean Eloi, the general secretary of the Communist-backed Fédération nationale des travailleurs du bâtiment (building workers' union), declared in the 1962 national congress: "Non, le travail n'est pas un exploit sportif, les hommes travaillent pour assurer leur propre existence et celle de leur famille, en même temps que celle de l'humanité, et non pour réaliser des exploits sportifs" ("No, work is not a sporting exploit. Men work to assure their own existence, and that of their family. At the same time, they work for humanity, and not to carry out sporting feats") (Eloi, 1963: 23). However, for film-

makers and artists alike, the building site proved an irresistible place to experiment with photography.

### **Disruption and Tragedy**

Work is not always celebrated as a sign of national progress and cutting-edge technology, or as visually stunning, certainly not by those who live next door to the building site. A number of television programmes focus on people's experiences of radical changes to the city as old districts are flattened. News and magazine programmes draw attention to traffic chaos and noise caused by construction work, and to the nostalgia and fear of loss of the place in which people lived all their lives.

Annie Fourcaut sees the Paris banlieue in the 1950s and 1960s as a site for nostalgic representations of a landscape and way of life that is about to be changed forever (Fourcaut, 2005: 123). Some filmmakers resisted the overwhelming changes to working class districts in Paris, through representations in films such as *Rue des Prairies* (Denis de la Patellière, 1959). This film contrasts an area of Paris alive with small shops and neighbours that talk to each other with the anonymous tower blocks of Sarcelles housing estate, completely isolated from the capital (Fourcaut, 2005: 129). Here, film narrative shows modern architecture to be threatening to familiar culture: "Les grands ensembles, esthétiquement spectaculaires, sont rapidement pris en compte par le cinéma et généralement montrés en opposition avec les restes d'un passé urbain qu'ils menacent" ("Cinema is quick to consider the aesthetically spectacular housing estates. Generally it shows them in opposition to the remains of an urban past that they menace") (Fourcaut, 2005: 130). But if individual filmmakers show nostalgia for the past, the television footage I viewed is less clear-cut. At once celebrating and warning of physical urban changes, and its impact on the population, French television tells an ambivalent story of the transformation of Paris, sharing excitement as much as promoting fear.

The cinema newsreel "Des travaux un peu partout" (*Les Actualités françaises*, 9 September 1964) shows shots of construction projects in Paris. A big-band jazz soundtrack accompanies the rapid succession of shots of construction projects in Paris, including the boulevard périphérique. While the focus of this news item is very much an evocation of an exciting future city of high-rise building and modern transport infrastructure, the sequence begins by making reference to the chaos and congestion construction work causes on the residents of Paris returning to the city after the summer holidays. "Dévié, parké, canalisé, les deux millions et demi de Parisiens qui sont revenues de vacances se sont trouvé pris dans un réseau de palisades et de barrières. Paris est devenu une sorte d'immense

chantier. [...] Elargir, creuser, jeter des ponts, la decongestion de la circulation de demain est à ce prix" ("Diverted, packed in, channelled, the two million Parisians that returned from holiday found themselves caught in a network of fences and barriers. [...] Paris has become a kind of immense building site / Widening, digging up, throwing bridges: this is the price of tomorrow's traffic decongestion"). Relentlessly upbeat, the film suggests that the inconveniences will be worth it once the "Paris of the year 2000" emerges from the chaos.

Link to video of « Des travaux un peu partout » (*Les Actualités françaises*, 9 September 1964 :

<http://www.ina.fr/economie-et-societe/environnement-et-urbanisme/video/AFE86000053/des-travaux-un-peu-partout.fr.html>

Less optimistic is "Paris an 2000" (episode of *Panorama* – a political, economic and social information magazine – 22 September 1967), which includes shots of the demolition of old housing and plans for new construction projects. The programme tells of the 4000 families and 300 local businesses that are directly affected by the construction of La Défense, many of whom will be forced out of their individual home to be rehoused in HLM tower blocks. To emphasize the contrast between the existing residential dwellings and the enormous modern developments at La Défense, one panoramic shot shifts its framing of the sweeping giant concrete vault of the CNIT building to that of a pitched roof individual house. Similarly, static shots of small family gardens are placed in sequence next to travelling shots of a long boulevard lined with high-rise housing units. The framing and juxtaposition of shots seeks to create the maximum visual contrasts to emphasise the struggling physical changes to the immediate surroundings of Paris. If the shots of La Défense are visually spectacular, the contrast with the crumbling old housing creates a tension between the desire to create the modern city, and the nostalgia for a suburban way of life that is being lost forever.

### *End of Broadcast*

At a time when so many cranes had never been seen in Paris, the building site was an irresistible subject matter for French television producers during the 1960s. In this chapter, I have tried to explore how the representation of building construction sites by French television during the 1960s formed a discourse on the transformation of the city. In order to understand how television programmes presented a vision of architecture, urbanisation, technology, work and the associated social upheaval, it has been necessary to analyse closely the production techniques of the found archive footage. To decipher the found archive material it is also helpful to place it within wider cultural and political context of the construction industry, suggesting reasons why state television might have been cau-

tious to criticise the dominance of state-backed public construction work, and how television helped contribute to a discourse of Gaullist nationalism.

In *The Assassination of Paris*, Louis Chevalier asks: "how did a new image of Paris emerge? It happened gradually, people were not on their guard, they gradually became accustomed to seeing the finished work (or work in progress), which served both as an argument and a pretext for a new Paris" (Chevalier, 1994: 198). French television in part participated in the construction of modern Paris by its frequent representation of building sites and new architecture, which created a particular discourse on construction projects. Apart from the references to the impact of construction work on the neighbouring population, television footage examines few social aspects of building sites, and rarely gives voice to labourers working on site. Focusing on the triumphant and spectacular nature of building work, television programme makers used a number of film techniques and editing procedures to create a narrative that celebrated a vision of the modern city and the economic health and progress of the nation.

## Notes

Unless otherwise stated, translations of quotations are my own.

Permalinks provided link directly to the INA.fr website (in French), which offers free viewing of a selection of material from the television archive. Links were active on 14 January 2010.

Research supported by the AHRC Doctoral Awards Scheme.

## References

Bruno, Giuliana (2002) *Atlas of Emotion*. New York: Verso.

Bourdon, Jérôme (1994) *Haute fidélité: Pouvoir et télévision, 1935-1994*. Paris: Seuil.

Chevalier, Louis (1994) *The Assassination of Paris*. Trans. David P. Jordan. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

De Lépinay, Jean-Yves (2005) Archives, in Thierry Jousse and Thierry Paquot (eds.), *La ville au cinéma*. Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma.

Delouvrier, Paul (1994) speaking in radio interview *A voix nue: grands entretiens d'hier et aujourd'hui*. *France Culture* (5 October).

Eloi, Jean (1963) Rapport général d'activité et d'orientation présenté par le Camarade Jean Eloi, secrétaire general. *Lettre fédérale* 94 (Mars), pp. 3-25.

Farge, Arlette (1989) *Le goût de l'archive*. Paris: Seuil.

Fourcaut, Annie (2005) Banlieue, in Thierry Jousse and Thierry Paquot (eds.), *La ville au cinéma*. Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma.

Hecht, Gabriel (1998) *The Radiance of France. Nuclear Power and National Identity after World War II*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Hoog, Emmanuel (2006) *l'INA*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Paquot, Thierry (2005) Urbanisme, in Thierry Jousse and Thierry Paquot (eds.), *La ville au cinéma*. Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma.

Winock, Michel (1987) *Chronique des années soixante*. Paris: Seuil.

## **Archives and Prefigurative Practices: Digital Games Walkthrough Archives as Record and Resource**

*Daniel Ashton, Bath Spa University*

Digital gaming walkthroughs are documents that offer instruction on gameplay and various elements of specific digital games. They can be written documents and, as this chapter explores, recorded moving-image footage captured in-game. Following an overview of emerging institutional efforts to archive digital games (culture), the archiving of walkthroughs will be examined. Firstly, the specificities of digital gaming archives, walkthroughs as archives, and archiving and professionalism will be considered. Secondly, the constitutive role of archive will be explored drawing on Barker's (2004) discussion of ancillary materials. Observing revealing similarities and contrasts, this discussion will highlight what is distinctive about digital gaming walkthrough archives in terms of prefigurative reach and the capacity to be used as both a record of the past and as resource for future gameplay.

### **Walkthroughs as Archives**

The National Videogame Archive (NVA), launched in October 2008 at the GameCity event in Nottingham, offers an instructive starting point for surveying digital gaming and issues of archiving. Introducing the NVA and some of the issues that its curatorial team faced provides an important contextual backdrop against which to situate the archiving of digital games walkthroughs as a specific aspect of digital games culture.

The NVA is a partnership between videogame studies academics at Nottingham Trent University's Centre for Contemporary Play and the museum and curatorial team at the National Media Museum. In introducing the NVA, James Newman poses the question, "surely the entire cultural history of a medium can't be consigned to eBay and car boot sales?" (2008). The following comments address this "car boot" concern and concisely introduces the archive:

The underlying remit of the archive is to collect and preserve videogames for future generations. This is our nation's cultural heritage, after all. But it's more than just the games themselves. Videogames are living, breathing things, not just code (though code is good, too). So, we want to make sure that we collect and record all the ephemera of videogame culture – all the box-art, instruction manuals, fanart, walkthroughs, cosplay, super-play performances, speedruns, mods...all the things that players



do with games and all the ways in which games pervade, influence and define contemporary popular culture. (Newman, 2008)

This statement points to the broad concerns of the NVA to archive digital games *culture*. At stake here are the different histories of digital gaming as a media and cultural form. As Melanie Swalwell (2007: 255) explores, drawing on the history of digital games in New Zealand, there have been shifts in esteem from “novelty to detritus, [and] to partial recuperation as nostalgia item.” Elsewhere, I have explored how ‘geek’ or ‘hardcore’ representations of digital gaming remain crucial in securing the standing and status of the industry, even as the strategy of widening appeal to new demographics takes hold (Ashton, 2008). To these points around cultural status, player status and industry strategy, the ongoing controversies around media violence (see Buckingham, 2001 for a broad discussion of media effects and children) and health concerns could be added as areas for investigating digital games culture (see Dovey and Kennedy, 2006 for a study of computer games using methods from Cultural Studies and New Media Studies).

The archiving of digital gaming culture is intimately bound up with changing cultural perceptions and industry strategies. Moreover, archiving works to both capture and construct diverse practices and understandings. Noting this, the curatorial remit of the NVA clearly signals the range of materials relevant to digital games culture. The examination of walkthroughs in this article focuses on the archiving of a distinctive element of digital games culture.

The walkthrough presents a number of ways to explore the archiving of moving images. Questions of whom and what is archived, who it is archived by, and the uses of these materials will be addressed in this article. As Lynn Spigel (2005: 67) suggests in relation to television preservation, the focus has typically been on “pragmatic issues of space, financing, copyright laws, donors, and advances in recording technologies,” and very little is known about “why programs were saved in the first place.” In arguing for the specific reach and purchase of walkthrough archives, questions of motivation and why certain game footage is captured are crucial. In tracing the process from capturing walkthrough footage to archiving it, a crucial element to recognize is the role of the player/archivist in generating the footage.

The player as a constitutive element in the *formation* of the moving image material is hugely significant. It is a characteristic of digital gaming that captured game footage bears the indelible trace of the player. Laura Ermi and Frans Mäyrä highlight the centrality of the player in the production of moving images:



The essence of a game is rooted in its interactive nature, and there is no game without a player [...] If we want to understand what a game is, we need to understand what happens in the act of playing, and we need to understand the player and the experiences of game-play. (2005: 1)

This recognition presents an interesting question around how each game walkthrough can be unique. There are many subtle elements to distinguish in different player walkthroughs, most obviously based around how the game avatar controlled by the player interacts with the game environment. The code of a particular game may be archived, but the moving images that emerge through and with a player of that game may be different. The trace of a particular player in captured moving image game footage is distinctive. Care should be taken not to overstate this, and as Kline et al. note, there are limitations to attend to: “though gamers navigate through virtual environments, their actions consist of selections (rather than choices) made between alternatives that have been anticipated by game designers” (2003: 19). That said, playing styles and choices made within the games environment by the player means that gameplay footage could differ in subtle ways. Gameplay footage can be regarded as significant for a diversity of reasons.

In his discussion of “Game Capture,” Henry Lowood suggests that “practices emerging from digital games constitute a form of creative expression and have defined a new space for ‘high performance play’ as players express themselves through merged performances of technology, gameplay, and storytelling” (2008). Focusing on the performance element, Lowood emphasizes the importance of game performance archives that are “not devoted to the history of game design, technology or business [...] but to the history of what players have done *inside* digital games.” Given that player generated moving image footage can be both generated and archived for a diversity of reasons, how this material is interpreted, labeled and organized is crucial. Lowood’s interest is specifically with how players learn to be creative with games and game-based performance, for example using avatars to play out a story that can be filmed. The archiving of walkthroughs is a related but distinctive way of archiving player performance. The player performances specific to walkthroughs is primarily a guide or aid for other players.

The *Stuckgamer.com* website offers an exemplary and instructive opportunity for introducing and exploring practices of archiving walkthroughs. *Stuckgamer* is described as “streaming enlightenment” and includes walkthrough guides for PC/Windows and console platforms for a range of games. Walkthroughs focus on different aspects of the game. For in-

stance, the videos available for *Resident Evil 4* include: Full Game Video Walkthrough, Separate Ways Video Walkthrough, Assignment Ada Video Walkthrough, Mercenaries Mini-Game Videos, Shooting Gallery Mini-Game Videos and Cut-Scene Videos. The moving image footage for *Resident Evil 4* available on *Stuckgamer* includes the cut-scene movie footage that is “non-interactive” (in the sense that what unfolds on screen is not subject to the control of the player), alongside walkthroughs for the full game, and specific elements such as the mini-games. Whilst for *Resident Evil 4* *Stuckgamer* provides a resource for gamers seeking to complete the game, walkthroughs often focus on very distinctive ways of playing the game. As Mia Consalvo (2007: 3) suggests, walkthroughs “challenge the notion that there is one ‘correct’ way to play a game.” For instance, for *Prince of Persia: The Two Thrones*, *Stuckgamer* provides “speed run” footage—videos that demonstrate the completion of sections of the game, levels, etc. in the quickest time possible. “Speed running” is a form of emergent gameplay that highlights ways of engaging with a game that are not easily anticipated. This will be revisited later in terms of resources and repertoires for gameplay. The above provides a snapshot of what is available on the *Stuckgamer* website. Beyond surveying what is available and how it is labeled, the question of whether *Stuckgamer* can be described as an “archive” requires further attention.

Ray Edmondson (1995: 246) in his discussion of film archiving as a profession highlights that use of the phrase ‘archive’ is a “semantic accident.” He goes on to state, “there’s no-ready made word, universally understood, to describe institutions which preserve moving images and sound recordings” and that “*Archive* is simply one of the words appropriated from the 1930s onwards, to do that job” (Edmondson, 1995: 246). The emergence of the term “archive” as an accident will be considered in more depth later (see Frick, 2008: 37). That *Stuckgamer* should be described as an archive seems consistent with existing usage, such as the inclusion of walkthroughs within the Internet Archive. Further support comes from the NVA and its broad approach and remit. Noting the remit to “exhibit, display and interpret videogames for a variety of audiences” and the need to find “strategies of interpreting games,” Newman suggests that playing can tell part of the total story and that the NVA “wouldn’t rule out any means of interpreting a game, whether it be the form of a fan fiction or official story bible, a fan-produced walkthrough or a game guide” (cited in Zachy, 2009). It is entirely consistent with emerging archiving efforts and attempts to develop dedicated curatorial approach, that digital games walkthroughs can be “archived.” Further to this, we might recognize that the practices and productions of those archiving digital games material, such as *Stuckgamer* and walkthroughs, might also be the focus of archiving efforts—archivists archiving archivists in a sense. The examination of archival practices is central to an examination of digital gaming

walkthroughs. Lynn Spigel (2005: 67) highlights issues of selection with reference to Michel Foucault and states, "the archive is preceded by a discursive formation that selects, acquires, and arranges words and things." Tracing the practices of the walkthrough archivist presents the opportunity to explore the selection and arrangement of digital games footage. This can be approached as a question of professionalism – what is revealed by exploring the practices of labelling and archiving through the lens of professionalism?

In her analysis of moving image archives and media industries, Caroline Frick (2009: 35) points to the "moving image archive community's conscious decision to distance itself from its vocational roots over the last several decades." Part of this movement was to ensure distance from amateurs. In terms of digital gaming, the amateur context is absolutely crucial. The commitment and dedication to archiving walkthroughs is entirely consonant with gift exchange aspects of digital games culture. For example, players use the games engine for an existing release to design and then share new levels. The modification, or "modding," of levels to create new gameplay opportunities sits alongside walkthroughs as major element of games culture. Sun et al. (2006: 560) in their study of gift culture and computer gaming, suggest "reciprocity can be used to explain small favor exchanges, but earning social reputation is often a much stronger motivating factor." *Stuckgamer* makes the gift culture element clear through an invitation to submit a request:

If you're interested in seeing a StuckGamer Video Walkthrough for a particular game, please use the form below to submit your request. If you're looking for a full game Video Walkthrough, just leave the "Guide Details" section empty. If you're looking for a video covering a specific portion of a game (boss battle, hidden item, etc.) please put that information in the "Guide Details" section. (Anon., 2008)

Through inviting requests, *Stuckgamer* is positioned as a place/person that can help and this can have associated links with social reputation. In this sense, the professional ethos that is seen to underpin film and television archiving (see Edmondson, 1995), is less of concern within digital gaming walkthrough archiving where we can highlight the factors noted by Sun et al. around collaboration and peer exchange. Moreover, the digital gaming ethos of peer support and gift exchange that underpins the archiving of walkthroughs highlights that these archives exist not primarily as preserved records of the past, but as resources for immediate use. Crucially then, a digital games culture ethos of sharing sees the archiving of walkthroughs for players to use in their own gameplay. Without seeking to determine relations or overplay the sharing ethos, recognizing the

specificity of *aspects* of digital games culture is significant for understanding walkthrough archives and, more broadly, the diverse formations of archives.

Martin Barker's discussion of ancillary materials published in *Scope* is instructive for further exploring the role and practices of walkthrough archivists. In his discussion of film analysis, Barker makes insightful comments for addressing the uses, influence or reach of a range of media "texts." In highlighting film reviews as part of the mediation of film reception, Barker notes that attending to film reviews can be valuable for challenging, "the unstated assumption in much film analysis that the presumed audience is some kind of end-point, experiencing films as things-in-themselves, and on the brunt of their assembled symbolic force." He goes on to suggest that, "to be a writer of reviews is to be one particular kind of audience." I would adopt this to suggest that to be a creator of a digital game walkthrough is to be a particular kind of player. *Stuckgamer* may be seen as player who is working through a game in a way particular for the purposes of creating a walkthrough that they can then archive. This understanding highlights the distinctive and different engagements with games, and that archiving can be intentional from the outset. Digital gaming walkthroughs offer a revealing approach for tackling the distinctions between "preservation" and "access." Importantly though, whilst I have suggested that to be an archivist is to be a particular type of player, I do not intend to separate practices of "playing-to-archive" from "playing." Rather, the intention is to explore this productive relationship; how can we connect the archivist and the player, and encounter the archive as resource for future gameplay?

## Archives and Prefigurative Practices

This question around the influence of digital games walkthroughs has clear connections with research on ancillary or satellite texts; texts, that according to Barker, "shape in advance the conditions under which interpretations of film are formed." In his discussion of ancillary materials, Barker suggests reviews need to be set "within the field of marketing and publicity materials, Press Kits and EPKs, contractually-required interviews and photo opportunities and so on – which together [...] constitute more or less patterned discursive preparations for the act of viewing." A firm sense of possible digital gaming ancillary materials can be drawn from Newman's statement on the aims of the NVA highlighting the archiving of fan art, box art, promotional trailers, and so on. What needs clarifying is how such materials may be understood as ancillary materials and how they connect with gameplay and others engagements with games. The prefigurative element is crucial here. As Barker highlights, these ancillary materials are "foreknowledge" that can shape "expectations," and demon-

strate that “significant prefigurative processes are regularly at work.” With regard to digital gaming, there are numerous ancillary materials that shape expectations, and as I will argue, actual gameplay. I would suggest that archived walkthroughs have a prefigurative potential and that exploring this can reveal how archives are engaged with and how their existence extends beyond recording and preserving, to shaping and influencing. This question around influence and resources then, returns us to definitional questions of the archive.

Edmondson (1995: 246) highlighted that the purchase of the term ‘archive’ is “because of its popular meaning as a place where old material is kept.” Similarly, Zacny’s (2009) perspective on archives seems to focus on loss and that footage is returned to as a marker of the past. Even the focus on “rediscovery and renewed debate” which Zacny attributes to the Good Old Games website (an archive of PC gaming of the 1990s), is primarily focusing on a historical return or examination in and of itself. I would suggest the immediate relationship possible between archived walkthrough and contemporary gameplay deserves much further analysis. This is not to overlook how past, ‘classic’ games can inform games design and play, but to look at the very immediate and proximate life of the archive when it comes to prefiguring forms of gameplay. It is useful at this point to return to the position of the “archive” as an accident. For Frick (2009: 37), “the selection of the term ‘archive’ by organizations around the world indicates a proactive decision, rather than passive ‘accident,’” and she goes on to state that, “by renaming their film library an ‘archive,’ the British Film Institute conveyed a prioritization of preservation over access.” Following this, the emphasis on access over preservation that marks *Stuckgamer* invites a careful rethinking of the role and potential of archives. The access imperative of *Stuckgamer*, demonstrated through its free access and invitation to submit requests, helps to make clear the prefigurative reach of digital gaming walkthrough archives – to help others play games. Whilst it is potentially unwise to make assumptions about digital games walkthroughs in a broad-brush manner, the concern with many of these walkthroughs is to make a contribution to gameplaying culture and communities.

Whilst there is much in common in terms of exploring ancillary materials across media forms and industries in terms of prefigurative practices, it is important to once again highlight the specificity of engagement. Barker suggests that ancillary materials “constitute a discursive framework around a film, a kind of mental scaffolding giving it particular kinds of ‘support’ and providing the means by which people may ‘climb inside.’” This notion of climbing inside can be usefully extended to digital gaming and, given the interactive nature and associated connotations, it may actually be more suited to digital gaming. To recall the specific engagement

with regard to digital gaming, “gamers actively help create the narrative, thematic, and ideological structures that determine the artifactual experience” (Ruggill et al., 2004: 301). In this respect, the “discursive preparations” and “mental scaffolding” to which Barker refers, may be more suitably reframed in relation to digital gaming as resources and repertoires for gameplay. The distinctive prefigurative reach with digital games walkthroughs archived on sites such as *Stuckgamer* is less about interpreting a text in existence, though this could be the case with in-game cut-scenes for example, and more about constructing an “artifactual experience.” The prefigurative reach of walkthroughs, I would suggest, is the contribution to ways of playing. It is the process of collecting and labeling that allows players to make sense of walkthroughs, and it is their archived existence that allows them to be easily enfolded with emerging and immediate gameplay. Drawing out the immanent contribution and the prefigurative reach of walkthrough archives can be usefully unpacked through Consalvo’s (2007) work on cheating.

Consalvo’s 2007 book *Cheating* discusses walkthroughs in relation to cheating and begins her analysis noting, “how players choose how to play games along with what happens when they can’t always play the way they’d like” (2007: jacket). Before examining cheating in detail, some points of commonality with Barker’s approach are revealing. Consalvo outlines an interest in materials “beyond the text” similar to Barker’s, with reference to Gerard Genette’s concept of the paratext. According to Consalvo (2007: 21), the paratext “constitutes all of the elements surrounding a text that help structure it and give it meaning,” and she specifically notes that, “what might have begun as the peripheral aspects of the game industry (magazines, strategy guides and so on) can now be recognized [...] as a paratext quite easily.” Consalvo (2007: 22) goes on to suggest with regard to gaming culture that magazines and strategy guides can “instruct the player in how to play.” There are clear parallels with notions of ancillary materials and the question of prefigurative practices animates both. The importance of ancillary materials as stated by Barker is comparable with Peter Lunenfeld’s perspective on paratexts as discussed by Consalvo. According to Consalvo (2007: 22), Lunenfeld holds that “we are in an age where the backstory to the creation of objects is often more interesting than the texts themselves.” This is a perspective that I imagine would strike a chord with many involved in archiving moving image footage. In this respect, approaching archival materials through the lens of ancillary materials and paratexts may, broadly speaking, be seen as commensurate with the efforts and endeavors of archiving. Moreover, I would argue that these perspectives invite us to examine the archive as something beyond the text that informs the text. With gaming this is in terms of the creation of new artifactual experiences. So, whilst Barker suggests “prefigurative talk about films [...] have strongly



performative aspects,” I would highlight the specificity of walkthroughs and digital gaming archives to make the claim that prefigurative *demonstrations* have a strongly performative aspect in the creation of new artifactual experiences.

As already noted, Consalvo suggests that, walkthroughs “challenge the notion that there is one ‘correct’ way to play a game” (2007: 3). Walkthroughs, alongside official manuals and guides for instance, are part of the diverse range of resources that players can turn to and that can make imminent contribution to gameplaying practices and activities. Consalvo (2007: 4) suggests that, “even the most linear game can be experienced in multiple ways, depending on a player’s knowledge of past games in that genre or series, including previewed information from magazines or Web sites, and marketing’s attempt at drawing attention to certain elements of the game.” Here the importance of archiving wider discourses and ephemera is made clear with regard to potentially pre-figurative influences on gameplay. In considering the relationship between archived materials and gameplay, intricate webs of influence and interplay may be posited. In this sense, the archived videogame walkthrough may be contrasted with a film or television archival material in that the archived walkthrough could be explicitly enrolled as a blueprint or guideline for engagement with those *same technological objects* (the console and game). A caveat must be made that gameplay is being seen in a rather asocial way and in relation to single-player games. When it comes to multi-player games, especially online, then even more factors shape the possibilities of gameplay.

Comparisons with film and television have thus far not been employed to avoid conflations and lack of specificity. Having said that, a key distinction is implicit and worthy of mention; whilst a film, television programme, etc., archived or not, may be analyzed for practical purposes or as clues for future viewing, the lessons learned do not generally go into reproducing that exact result. Gus Van Sant’s 1998 remake of Alfred Hitchcock’s 1960 *Psycho* shot-by-shot with the same music and basically the same dialogue highlights when a truthful remake is the aim. Similarly, experiments in remixing films as seen in Michel Gondry’s 2008 *Be Kind Rewind* highlight a close reworking of existing texts. I would not want to overlook the increasingly mundane ways in which textual reworkings are carried out, but would say, generally speaking, if the film viewer were analogous to the gamer, then examination of previous materials is not for the purposes of re-creation. This substantial difference must be foregrounded and the related corollary is to argue for the prefigurative potential of the archive. The walkthroughs posted on *Stuckgamer* illustrate how the *Stuckgamer* archive and its contents provide a resource and point to “pre-



figurative processes at work;" these are the materials that players can use to guide their own playing practices.

It is when walkthroughs are used as a means to "cheat" within a digital game, that the significance of both the organizing, labeling and making sense of walkthroughs and that these archives are resources for gameplay practices comes to the fore. Being careful not to overstate the claims that can be supported without examination of player practices, I would argue that archived walkthroughs have a prefigurative purchase that re-frames the life of the archive.

### **Repertoires of/for use**

The digital games walkthrough archive poses instructive questions about who archives moving image footage, for what purposes, and how they are used. In unpacking archives as both a record of gameplay and as a resource, Barker's discussion of ancillary materials again proves insightful. In outlining three stages for the investigation of ancillary materials, Barker suggests firstly, a study of the "life of ancillary materials" and how they "constitute a discursive framework." In the second stage following this, there would be a "study of how audiences encounter, make use of, or are persuaded by that framework." This is followed thirdly, by a study of how the actual encounter leads to expectations, disappointments, and so on.

The second stage on "actual encounters" is instructive for exploring the walkthrough as an archive. As noted, the walkthrough sits alongside a range of other materials and resources including strategy guides, other players, and so on. Taking the walkthrough specifically, the way it is archived opens it up for players to make use of it. The *Stuckgamer* name is a key signifier of the guidance that the site provides. It is a dedicated space in which carefully organized and introduced materials can be accessed. The examples offered earlier for *Prince of Persia* illustrate the exacting breakdown and archiving of games with specific descriptions.

An interesting distinction in Barker's analysis around pre- and post- viewing encounters with ancillary materials is worth noting. Barker stresses that the encounter with a film cannot be assumed at the end as the credits roll, and the "pre" of "prefigurative" does not rule out an examination of "sense-formation" in relation to reviews, clues, etc. after the film. Rather, to read these afterwards "is still prefigurative in as much as it contributes to the understanding that develops" (Barker, 2004). In contrast, I have argued that the process of making sense of a digital game as it is informed by walkthroughs relates to the *future artifactual experience*. Emphasizing the future artifactual experience does not though deny that further understandings could develop. Viewing a walkthrough following

play may prompt a “oh, so that was the way to do it!” recognition. Rather what I have sought to stress is how the “that is the way to do it” element is translated into the player’s own engagement with a game.

The questions posed in the third stage around how encounters are experienced, provides some useful suggestions for developing further research into the prefigurative reach of archived materials in relation to digital games walkthroughs. Barker’s reference to the “fulfillment of expectations, or disappointment, or surprise, or frustration” could be translated into a survey of how players engage with walkthroughs in their own gameplay. This would be to caution against assumptions around prefigurative reach and to push for an extensive examination of player practices. This third stage of analysis is beyond the scope of this article, but I will conclude in highlighting how it may be situated alongside existing work in reception studies. Specifically, Joke Hermes’ work on magazine readers (1995) offers insights into how analyzing how audiences “make sense.”

Hermes (1995: 24) highlights that content from different media are integrated and that “media use is never an isolated individual process, but a collective process.” This resonates with the earlier appreciation of the archive’s potential place alongside a range of other sources of advice and guidance. In this respect, tracing the prefigurative reach of any given archived walkthrough may be a highly artificial undertaking. In turn though, an approach that allows the “reader to speak” (Hermes, 1995: 5) opens up avenues for making connections between the archived walkthrough and player practices. Hermes develops repertoire analysis to make sense of the descriptions and accounts provided by her research participants. The appeal of Hermes’ approach is for tracing how players pursue forms of gameplay. How are players able to describe their use of walkthroughs in completing a level or developing their gameplay style? Moreover, “the special merit of repertoire analysis,” Hermes argues, “is that it recognizes that speakers will refer to different repertoires” (1995: 32). In this respect, walkthroughs can be employed in diverse ways and a reading of the prefigurative reach of archived walkthroughs should avoid instrumentalism. For instance, one usage may involve the archived walkthrough providing ready access to a segment of gameplay allowing a designer to assess elements of level layout or a graphic artist to view textures and colours within a specific environment. These fairly plausible reasons must sit alongside a raft of other unknown reasons. Hermes (1995: 40) also makes clear that “repertoires are rhetorical tools” and “the arguments readers put forward do not necessarily reflect what they do with magazines, but rather what they may wish to do with them.” Translating this, we could say that players may not necessarily be able to perform the actions and routines captured in the walkthrough. This may be likely given the proficiency demonstrated in the *Stuckgamer* videos. These ques-

tions and concerns could be invaluable in refining an analysis of both the production and reception of archival materials. The key point to reiterate from this discussion and that I will conclude with, concerns the life of the archive.

## Conclusions

To approach archived walkthroughs as ancillary materials is highly productive for examining the diverse sites of meaning making associated with a given digital game. In doing so, our encounter with the archive shifts to not exclusively seeing it as a record of the past, but as a resource for future action. This may not seem surprising if we think of how a film director might return to previous footage to gain inspiration or practical advice. In terms of digital gaming though, this article has pointed to players accessing walkthroughs in relation to their own playing of a game. The prefigurative reach of the archive is in the construction of new artifactual experiences. These artifactual experiences are unique to a player in a given space and time, but can be seen as fundamentally informed by the archived walkthrough. Here is the prefigurative reach that resonates with Barker's analysis of ancillary materials. The archive then, as an ancillary material, informs play.

Indeed, focusing on walkthroughs as archives brings to the fore the purposeful construction of the archive and associated social contexts, for example the gift culture associated with digital gaming. In relation to this gift culture, the archivist of digital games walkthroughs was approached as a particular type of player, and a consideration of the archivist as the creator of the archive emerges. Again, the contrast with film and television in which an amateur film-maker makes and then archives a film would be how the required materials (for a single-player game for example, mass-produced consoles and game) are ready-to-hand and allow for a reenacting. The potential for making available moving image footage via the Internet is an area of burgeoning interest. This article has sought to highlight the specificity of archives, for example games cultures and gift exchange, and the specificity of how those archives are engaged with, for example as a resource for generating new but closely informed, artifactual experiences.

## References

Anon. (2008) Requests, *Stuckgamer.com*. Available at: [http://www.stuckgamer.com/main\\_request.shtml](http://www.stuckgamer.com/main_request.shtml) [accessed 10 November 2008]

Ashton, Daniel (2008) Digital Gaming Upgrade and Recovery: Enrolling Memories and Technologies as a Strategy for the Future, *M/C Online* 11 (6). Available at: <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/viewArticle/86> [Accessed: 8 May 2010]

Barker, Martin (2004) News, Reviews, Clues, Interviews and Other Ancillary Materials – A Critique and Research Proposal, *Scope* (February). Available at: <http://www.scope.nottingham.ac.uk/reader/chapter.php?id=2> [accessed 8 May 2010]

Buckingham, David (2001) Electronic Child Abuse? Rethinking the Media's Effects on Children, in Martin Barker and Julian Petley (eds.), *Ill Effects* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London: Routledge.

Consalvo, Mia (2007) *Cheating*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Dovey, Jon and Kennedy, Helen W. (2006) *Game Cultures*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Edmondson, Ray (1995) Is Film Archiving a Profession?, *Film and History* 7, pp. 245-255.

Ermi, Laura and Mäyrä, Frans (2005) Fundamental Components of the Game-play Experience: Analysing Immersion, in Suzanne de Castell and Jennifer Jenson (eds.), *DiGRA 2005: Changing Views: Worlds in Play*. Vancouver: Simon Fraser University Press.

Frick, Caroline (2009) Manufacturing Heritage: The Moving Images Archive and Media Industry Studies, in Jennifer Holt and Alisa Perren (eds.), *Media Industries*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 34-44.

Hermes, Joke (1995) *Reading Women's Magazines*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Kline, Stephen, Dyer-Witheford, N., and de Peuter, G. (2003) *Digital Play*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Lowood, Henry (2008) Game Capture: The Machinima Archive and the History of Digital Games, *Mediascape* (Summer). Available at: [http://www.tft.ucla.edu/mediascape/Spring08\\_GameCapture.html](http://www.tft.ucla.edu/mediascape/Spring08_GameCapture.html) [accessed 8 May 2010]

Newman, James (2008) Old Videogames Don't Matter, *Edge Magazine*. Available at: <http://www.edge-online.com/blogs/old-games-don%E2%80%99t-matter> [accessed 10 November 2008]

Ruggill, Judd., McAllister, Ken S., and Menchaca, David (2004) The Gamework, *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, 1 (4), pp. 297-312.

Spigel, Lynn (2005) Our Television Heritage: Television, the Archive, and the Reasons for Preservation, in Janet Wasko (ed.), *A Companion to Television*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 67-99.

Sun, Chuen-Tsai., Lin, Holin., Hong Ho, Cheng (2006) Sharing Tips with Strangers: Exploiting Gift Culture in Computer Gaming, *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 9 (5), pp. 560-570.

Swalwell, Melanie (2007) The Remembering and the Forgetting of Early Digital Games: From Novelty to Detritus and Back Again, *Journal of Visual Culture*, 6 (2), pp. 255-273.

Zacny, Rob (2009) Preserving Our Playable Past, *Escapist Magazine*, p. 190.

## **Filmography**

*Be Kind Rewind*. Dir. Michel Gondry. New Line Cinema. 2008.

*Psycho*. Dir. Alfred Hitchcock. Shamley Productions. 1960.

*Psycho*. Dir. Gus Van Sant. Universal Pictures. 1998.